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CAVEAT

AGAINST

Evil Company.

By *SIMON BROWNE.*



L O N D O N :

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The Preface.

THE Prodigious and Growing Wickedness of the Age and Land in which we live, is Matter of Daily Grief to all who have any just Regard to the Honour of God, or do indeed wish well to their Native Country; Great and Incorrigible Sins being the common Fore-runners of very grievous Judgments, and oftentimes the Prelude to a General Desolation.

AND sure 'tis the Duty of all to bring what Help they can, to quench this Fire, before it blazes out into a Wasting Flame, and rages too high to be Extinguished. Men can't be Indifferent to such useful and necessary Service, without proclaiming their Neutrality in the Cause of G O D, their Unconcern for the best Interests of Men; That they are withdrawn from their Allegiance to the Sovereign of the World, and are unwilling to appear on his Side: That they are shrunk into Spiritless Clods, and have no Life to be spent in the Service of Mankind.

THESE Considerations, or such as these, have Incited some within these few Years, to Embody and unite their Forces against Invading and prevailing Vice, that did before wast like a Pestilence at Noon-Day; and others to Hearten 'em on to the War, by all due Encouragements. Blessed be God that their Attempts have not been wholly Successless.

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And oh! that more might be stirred up to follow the Glorious Example; to bid Defiance to the Sins of Men, whilst the Tenderest Love and Pity to their Souls and Bodies, are the Generous Principles that Animate and carry them forward, thro' the vast and discouraging Undertaking.

THE abounding of Iniquity, notwithstanding all their Attempts, doth assure us, That something is yet wanting to compleat the Design. And how much wou'd God be Glorified, and all good Men rejoiced? What an Happiness wou'd it be to the Land in General, if some Method cou'd be found out, and put in Execution with Universal Success; so as to give a Check to, and drive back the Swelling Torrent, bring a Blush into the Face of Sin, force it into a Corner, to be perpetrated in the Retreats of Darknes, and avoid the Shine of Day. Men wou'd by Degrees be brought to an Abstinence from Evil, if they were thus made asham'd of it. Conscience, that by the Sollicitations and Encouragements of Company, is frequently Baffled and put to Silence, wou'd then speak with the more Assurance and Command, and force the Trembling Wretch to hear. But till it shall please the Great God to pour forth much larger Measures of his Spirit and Grace, we have no such a Glorious Reformation in Prospect.

THEY must we not wipe our Mouths, and put our Hands into our Bosom, as if the Despair of such a Blessed Revolution, were sufficient

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cient Discouragement from all Attempts against Sin. The Means are to be used; and what was just now suggested, directs us to one Method of curing the Predominant Evil; the Discovery of the Cause being in most Cases, the readiest way to find out proper Remedies for the Distemper.

AND I conclude, it should be obvious to all, who know any thing of the World, That the Devil makes most Slaves among Men, and holds all who are once Inveigled, the faster in his Chains, by Ensnaring Society. A Combination in Crime, creates Boldness in Sinning. A sinful Emulation puts upon the more uncommon Arts and Improvements of Vice, and prompts to that Measure of Wickedness which wou'd be frightful to the Sinner whilst alone; which he wou'd not have the Courage to Commit, if he had not some bold and desperate Abettors.

HOW many Millions hath the Devil ruin'd in all Ages, by these Methods? How many are now ruining themselves, thro' his Advice by his under Counsellors? How many are there, who in their Immature Age afforded pregnant Hopes of doing something more than Common for the Service of the Church of Christ, and their Country, that have been drawn aside by the Snares of a vitious Society; and after a little Converse with them, have worn out all former Sober Impressions, have become the Reproach of their Family, the Bane of their Neighbourhood, the Ruiners of their Country, (as far as 'twas in their Power) the Plagues of the Church, and Burthens to themselves.

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selves. Oh how Industriously, when once they are engag'd, do their mad Companions endeavour to drown, or cast out every Serious Thought that wou'd make 'em shrink from Sin? How carefully is every thing banish'd the Company, that wou'd lay their vain or vitious Minds under any Restraints? And how suddenly must their Ruin be finished, who are once enter'd into so vile a Confederacy, and given up to the Conduct and Command of such Fatal Directors? Many mournful Parents throughout England, who have had all their Hopes of their Children, in this way, blasted and defeated at once, can give a melancholy Relation of their sudden Proficiency in Vice, and how obstinately deaf they have been to all their pious Perswasions, after they have once been Charm'd and Chain'd by the Allurements of vain and vitious Companions. Many desperately wicked Wretches that have now Sear'd their Consciences, put out even their Natural Light, and are transform'd into Brutes and Monsters, tho' they were once promising Instances of a Careful Education, cou'd (if they had the Honesty or Courage) tell, how they were first drawn away by these Bewitching Charms, and how soon they grew up to Hardy Defiers of the Authority of God, the serious Advices of Men, and the Checks of their own Consciences.

I am sure, ail that look before them must see, that evil Conversation hath been the great Corrupter of our Age; the Debaucher of our Principles and Morals. This hath multiplied the Impious Assaulters of our Christian Faith in gross,
and

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and the several Important Articles of it. This hath brought in upon us a Torrent of Lewdness and Debauchery, and carry'd Impudence in Sinning to that prodigious Height, as was unknown to the Heathen World. and wou'd have been a stranger Objection in the Mouths of their thinking Men against Christianity, than all the Mysteries in it. This hath fill'd all Places with Profaness and Blasphemies, dreadful Curses and Imprecations; so that there is no walking our Streets without having our Ears grated, and our very Hearts chill'd, with this Language of Hell. This hath brought such a General Contempt upon Preaching, and other Divine Ordinances, and embolden'd Men to make a Jest of Sacred Institutions and droll upon the Bible. This hath Thin'd our Churches, and fill'd the Play-Houses, those Seminaries of Wickedness, that seem to have been Erected by the Devil, to Confront Christian Assemblys, and shew that he hath Vassals at his Command, to preach up boldly his Kingdom, and a more numerous Throng to attend upon their Instructions, than an Holy Jesus can Boast of in several Churches thro' the Land. Wretches that can dare to serve him at the Expence of their Fame, Health, Estates, at the Hazard of their Bodys and Souls, every thing that is dear to them, and deserves to be valued in Time, and to Eternity. This (in a Word) hath brought that General Coldness in the Cause of GOD, upon the Professors of Christianity, and those Departures from him, that are the fearful Indications of a more General Defection and Apostacy.

O H formidable Progress of Vice, even in a Christian Land, where the Laws of GOD and Man have appear'd to controul it! And must wicked Company be esteem'd a Principal Cause of this Monstrous Growth? And is it not Time for some to sound the Alarm, and let poor unwary Sinners know the Evil and the Danger of it? Is it not Time for some to
diswade

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diswade from such pernicious Conversation? Ah! won'd to God we cou'd diswade, that we cou'd shew poor heedless Wretches their Danger, so as to aff-righten 'em from it. But the Means must be used, and the Success left to him, who in all such Cases must give the Increase.

I have made some Attempt therefore for the Remedy of this Evil, and that thro' the Blessing of GOD it might be of General Advantage, have ventur'd to make it Publick in a Critical Age. (tho' not without the Desire of many, and Approbation of some, whose Judgment I value much more than mine own) May that Great God (who once by a Stone from the Hand of a Sipling, beat down a Giant, who bad Defiance to his Armies, and therefore to his Power) now Glorify his Excellent and Saving Might, by working some such Effects by the present Essay. That some may be call'd off from wicked Company that are already engag'd, others may be deterr'd from it, and kept out of Reach, and all may be left without Excuse. into whose Hands this shall fall, who will not be warn'd nor reclaim'd.

I shall finish this Preface (already swell'd beyond my first Intention) when I have desir'd (1.) All such as wish well to the Design, to Second it with their fervent Prayers to GOD, that the Attempt may not altogether fail of Success. (2.) All who think the Discourse fully form'd to promote this End, and have Ability, to render it as Generally useful as may be. And (3.) Such as are Ensnar'd or Endanger'd by Evil Company, especially the Youth, to weigh seriously what is offer'd to Consideration, to be Faithful to themselves, and not stifle or withstand the Convictions of their Consciences, and defy God, harden themselves, and bring upon them a quick and inevitable Ruine by such Opposition.

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SIMON BROWN.

Prov. XIII. 20. Lat. Part.

*A Companion of Fools shall
be destroyed.*

THE Impressions made upon the Minds of Men, by the Society to which they joyn themselves are so notorious, that among most Civilized Nations it is grown customary to describe a Man by his Company. The Society a Man prefers and uses is esteem'd one of the best Discoveries of his inward Temper, and his Course of Life. And I am sure, Man, whose Nature seems contriv'd for a Social, not a Solitary State; whose Inborn Propensions render him Fond of Companions, should use a great Measure of Prudence in the Choice of them; since their Influence is so natural and universal. He who would not bring upon himself a Quick and a Certain Ruin, must refuse the Familiar Converse of those, whose Advice, Example, and Course of Life, do directly and plainly tend thereto. But such who call themselves *Christians*, are above all others concern'd to guard themselves here, because the Ruin they venture

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ture upon by such a Conversation, is of the most frightful Kind; exceeding great and irreparable. And one wou'd think this were an Argument Powerful enough to deter them from a Choice of such for their Companions, whose Temper of Mind, and Course of Life, are flatly opposite to those Sacred Prescriptions by which they are oblig'd to think and walk.

THE Wise *Preacher* thinks it sufficient therefore, to caution against this Society, by shewing the dangerous Contagion thereof; and supposes that every Man in his Senses, would take the Hint from such a Discovery: And as for the Sake of their Bodies, they flee from One sick of the Plague, or any deadly Distemper of the like Contagious Nature; so, for the Sake of much more important Interests, they would shun that Society which exposes them to Hazards and Dangers of the most Fatal Consequence.

AND yet alas! We see the Generality of Mankind are wreck'd on this Rock; undone by the Society with which they converse.

IT may not then be improper to set in View some of the mischievous and ruinous Effects of evil Company; which the Words of our Text do so fully Assert: *Companion of Fools shall be destroyed.*

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THE Words are an entire Proposition, which when we have explain'd and confirm'd, we shall endeavour to improve: And all in this Order.

I. WE shall tell you who the Fools are, whose Society is so Destructive.

II. WE shall shew you, who is to be reputed a Companion of Fools.

III. WE shall endeavour to prove, that such a Companion of Fools is in the ready Way to certain Ruin.

IV. DRAW some Inferences from the whole: Of these, in Order.

I. LET us enquire who those Fools are, whose Society is in our Text asserted to be Destructive. And we are by the Fool here, not to understand one whom some Natural Defect deprives of the due Use of his thinking Faculties, and Powers; but One whom vicious Habits hinder from the fit Exercise of those Faculties, about the Matters of his highest and best Interest. For, it is very obvious, upon a little Acquaintance with Scripture Stile, that Fool and Wicked are very frequently Terms of the same Sense and Signification. The immediate- *Prov. 4.* ly preceeding Verse here, may be taken as an 6. 14 ch. Instance. It is an *Abomination for Fools* 7. 9. ch.

24. ch. 9. *to depart from Evil.* And many more
 26. ch. might be quoted. And it is no Wonder
 10. 11. that the same Book of God that tells us,
 111 Psa. *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wis-*
 10. 25 *dom,* i. e. The Height and Perfection of it,
 Job 28. should call such as are destitute of this
 Fear, Fools.

THE Wicked Person then in general
 is the Fool, whose Company is here as-
 serted to be destructive: And he is a wick-
 ed Person, who impenitently persists in a
 Course of known Sin: The Tenor of
 whose Conversation doth manifest, that he
 is under the Reigning Power of some Vice
 (especially if it be a gross notorious Sin :)
 Now, these being various; that we may
 the more fully understand who those Fools
 are, it will be proper to descend to Par-
 ticulars, and point them out to you, accor-
 ding to the Vice that predominates in the
 Heart, and shews it self most in the Con-
 versation: And here it is fit that the

I. CAVILING Unbeliever should
 lead the Van, as the chief, and most dan-
 2 Pet. 4. gerous of all. He who gives not Credit
 3, 4 Jude himself to the Principles of reveal'd or
 18. natural Religion, and doth what he can to
 cavil others out of their Belief: That pre-
 tends to own no God, the Almighty Pa-
 rent and Ruler of the World, who shou'd
 give Being to all Things contain'd therein,
 assign

assign them their various Stations and Services, and Efficaciously prescribe Rules to them, for their ready Regularity in their Motions; but ascribes this Beautiful and Orderly Universe, and the regular and Harmonious Motions of all the Beings in it, to the necessary Tendency of stupid Matter, or the powerful Efficacy of blind Chance: (A Word that however it may cheat with its Sound a resolv'd Infidel, doth in Reality signify just nothing) Or if he own a God, will confine him to Heaven, and remove him far away from any Sight or Observation of his Creatures, or Concern with them; and will pretend to skirmish with his weak Sophistry against these Impregnable Truths.

1 Tim. 1.
19. 20.

2 Tim. 2.

Isa. 29. 15.
ch. 47. 10.
and Ezek.
12. ch. 9. 9.

HE that pretends to own no Dependence upon any Supream, Wise, and Almighty Being, for his Life and Enjoyments; no Subjection to the Law and Rule of any Supream Lord, or any Obligations to use his Faculties and Powers, moderate and confine his Passions and Appetites, or order his Behaviour towards his Fellow Creatures, according to his Prescriptions; who will offer his Cavils against all the plain Duties that Natural Religion teaches; and will dare to question (at least) whether you owe God any Reverence, Love or Obedience; whether you are under any Tyes of Justice, Faithfulness, Honesty, Gratitude,

or Kindness to your Fellow-Creatures; whether you should have any Concern for your principal Part, the Soul; or observe any Rational *Decorum*, or Comeliness, in your Actions: And is very free to avow, that you may live as you list; and permit Appetite and Fancy, Lust and Passion, to range as they please; without any Regard to the Dignity of the reasonable Nature, the Welfare of your Fellow-Creatures, your Fame, or Bodily Health; yea, or the Sovereignty and Honour of your Supream LORD: And to offer something that he calls Reason, for the Justification of these his wild Principles: Or, if he professes to own the Principles of Natural Religion, will yet tell you the Bible is all Sham and Forgery, your Saviour a Cheat, his Gospel an Imposture; the Doctrines therein contain'd a flat Contradiction and impossible: That the Terrors of Hell and the Triumphs of Heaven are all Imaginary; as vain and delusory as the Figments of the Heathen Poets; and is very prompt and ready to try his Skill in making good his Charge, and in endeavouring to discredit those reasonable Evidences which have in all Ages born up the Credit of Christianity, and made Way for its Reception, Entertainment, and Establishment in the World.

AND Wonder not that I rank such prodigious Blasphemers as these, among the
Fools,

Fools, whose Society is ruinous and destructive. This you'll say appears at the first Glance: The very Breath of such Men is Mortally Venomous, who would rob GOD of the Honour of their Being and Enjoyments, and of the Sovereignty of the World; CHRIST of the Honour of his Salvation; and turn the Earth into a Den of Thieves, of Beasts and Furies: But sure there can be none so mad and monstrous among Men! Yes Sirs, our unhappy Times afford too many of them. And perhaps your own Conversation will afford you still Instances of more; who if they don't flatly disown all these necessary Truths, do yet disbelieve to that Degree, the Revelation contain'd in the Bible, as to Evacuate the weighty Doctrines thereof, and render them Null, as to the Influence they should have upon their Minds. That not only say in their Hearts, *There is no God*; but avow *Psa. 14. 1.* their Infidelity by their Practices: Or, if they own a GOD, will take away Justice and Wisdom, and Holiness from his Nature, and make him up of Attributes every way Inconsistent with Divine Perfections.

2. THE Prophane and Blasphemer. He who will profess to own the Being of a God, and the Awful Truths delivered in the Bible; and therefore to own a God invested with all those shining Glorys, and
2 Tim. 3. 2.
3.

possess'd of those Excellencies and Perfections which the holy Scriptures ascribe to him : But yet will treat him with the same Scorn and Contempt as he would cast on the most trifling Fellow-Creature, that will tols about his Name in common Discourse, with the utmost Levity and Unconcernedness; that upon trivial Provocations receiv'd from a Companion, will turn the Edge of their Resentments against God himself; Dare the Thunders of his Power, and desire Damnation; or else wish it may be the dreadful Portion of such as have offended them; that rage at such as in tender Pity tell them of their Madness and Danger; spitefully reproach them with the Name of Saints, and persecute them as the Troublers of their wicked Peace; that laugh at them as whimsical Fools, who too much dread the Wrath of an Angry GOD, or Sin which deserves it; (and is in its own Nature (perhaps) more frightful) and make too much Troublesome Adoe about going to Heaven; that mock and deride all serious Godliness, bid Defiance to the Checks of their own Consciences; the Vengeance of their God, and the Miseries of Hell: Or else as prophanelly presume, That (tho' they trample under Foot his most Sacred Institutions, contemn his Laws, reproach, vilifie and abuse his Servants, disdain the Honourable strictness

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of their Profession, and offer them the highest Indignities and Outrages) he will fondly overlook these Provocations of theirs, *Pf. 50. 21.* and receive and caress them with the tenderest Pity and Love. Or however, are resolv'd to put all to the Hazard; and tho' they treat GOD in the most contemptible Manner whilst alive, by braving his Justice, Blaspheming his Name, sporting with his Vengeance, scorning his sacred Institutions, Snuffing at his Services and Worship, trampling upon his Authority and Regal Power, slighting his Grace and Son, and laughing at his Holiness, or the Transcript thereof, drawn by Grace upon the Hearts of real Believers, will yet venture upon his Mercy when they die, and launch forth into his terrible Presence then, with a Confidence more Blasphemous than the vilest of their Behaviour whilst alive.

3. THE Sabbath-breaker may very fitly be subjoyn'd to the Foregoing: (The Sin it self being an high Contempt of Divine Authority, and leading on to an established Contempt of GOD in all other Instances :) He who will acknowledge himself under no Obligation to set apart One Day in Seven for the Service of GOD, or the great Interest and Concern of his precious Soul: But makes the LORD's Day a Time of Business or Pleasure, without ever appearing

ing in the publick Assemblies of the Saints, or honouring GOD by a faithful Use of the Ordinances he hath appointed for the beginning and carrying on to Perfection, a Life of Grace; and which are administered usually on this Holy Day: Or if he doth afford his bodily Presence, is yet weary of the Confinement, and as soon as the Publick Service of the Day is over, reckons the rest of the Time his own; and spends it in idle Walks or Visits, in the Tavern or Coffee-House, in impertinent Chat and Conversation, without ever withdrawing from the World, to look into his Heart, or examine into his Frame, whilst attending upon Ordinances; or what he has reapt by his Attendance; without ever taking Care to Instruct his Family in the necessary Truths of the Christian Religion, to Catechise them, pray with them, read the Holy Scriptures to them, or make them sensible that they have a GOD to please and Glorifie, and Souls to save that are worth more than the World: Or, if he may sometimes drop some Words concerning these Things, yet tis in such a light, unferious Manner as is never likely to make any saving Impression upon them, and whatever he saith to them; yet by his own carnal, idle and careless Behaviour on this Holy Day, doth much to perswade them (in flat Contradiction to the Scriptures) that

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the Way to Heaven is broad and smooth, and easy, and that there is no such Danger of a Miscarriage, as shou'd make them over sollicitous about their Salvation. In a Word, he who on this Day is not seriously concern'd in Publick and Private, in the Church, and in his Closet and Family, to promote his own Salvation and theirs who are committed to his Charge; that doth not esteem the Day indeed devoted or consecrated to GOD: Or if he hath such a Thought, will yet spend it in Visits, Feastings, Pleasures for which he had no Vacation in the Week; or else would overlook it, because he esteem'd the LORD's Day a Season of greater Leisure for Attendance on his Friends or his Pleasures, is another of the Fools whose Society is to be esteemed Perilous.

I shall not spend Time in proving Christians under an Obligation to Hallow this Day, but refer the Reader that calls for such Proof, to a brief Tractate of the Reverend Mr *Baxter* on this Head: Only I would beg Leave to observe, That such as dispute against the strict Observation of this Day, would rob the Church of Christ of one of her most valuable Priviledges, since 'tis Morally impossible, that the Multitudes among Christians should have Time to mind the great Concern of their Souls to any Purpose. if God had not ordained this

*His Divine
Appoint-
ment of the
Lord's Day.*

this Day for an Holy Vacation from secular Business and worldly Vanity, for their immediate Attendance upon his Worship; even Christians themselves would be too deeply immers'd in secular Concerns, and grow too unmindful of another World, if the Weekly Returns of this Day did not relieve them. And I need not say any Thing to make those Holy Souls who live in Believing, Longing Expectations of spending a long Eternity in the joyful Service of their God, sensible how great their Felicity is, in having One Day in Seven set apart for the same Work here Below; that on Earth they may begin the Musick of Heaven, and get their Hearts, by holy Exercise, more fitted to the Life and Employment of Saints in Glory.

4. THE Religious Disputer; (if I may so call one that hath really no Religion, but sides what floats in the Head without sinking as deep as the Heart, or making any Saving Impressions there) who is upon all Occasions very ready to publish his Conceits, makes a mighty Pother about the Notions he hath either receiv'd from Tradition, or spun out of his own Fertile Brain; and will spend whole Hours, or Days, in useless Enquiries, Assertions, Oppositions and Debates, but never seriously examines what practical Use should be made of the Principles he owns, and with so much Vehement
- 1 Cor. 1. 20. 1 Tim. 6. 4, 5.

ry maintains, how his own Heart should be
 affected with them; or how he should em-
 ploy them for the Propagation and Fur-
 therance of real Godliness: Who is very
 Fierce in disputing for his particular Noti-
 ons concerning Grace, the Will of Man,
 the Method of Divine Decrees, the Mode
 of Personal Subsistence in the Trinity, (which
 last no Man understands, and therefore sure-
 ly not the most forward and confident in their
 Determinations) and the Nature of Faith,
 its Interest in Justification, &c. when alas!
 The Truth of none of these Instances is
 us'd by them to humble and quicken them,
 to perswade them to Consecrate and Devote
 themselves to God, and live by his Gra-
 cious Influences, according to the Direction
 of his Holy Word; no Pains taken to ma-
 nifest themselves to be true Believers and
 justify'd, by the Operative Virtue of their
 Faith; nor any Thing mingled with their
 Disputes, that hath any serious Savour, or
 tends to the Furtherance of real vital Re-
 ligion: Who will unweariedly canvass the
 Controversies now Afoot in the Christian-
 World, about the Out-works and Appen-
 dices of Religion, about Church-Officers,
 Government, and Censures; about Modes
 of Worship, Forms and Ceremonies; op-
 pose or defend with Eagerness and Heat;
 yea, with fiery Zeal, a Zeal that will not
 only consume themselves, but blaze out
 and

and wast all round them, whilst they are utterly unconcern'd about cherishing the Vitals, the Inward Warmth and living Power of true Religion, and at once permit their Love to GOD and their Neighbour to freeze, and languish, and die: And in all their eager Disputes, never concern themselves to make Converts to Christ; but only forward and confident Zealots of their own Side. They make many Times a troublesome Noise for their own Fancies, but are little concern'd about the Frame of their Hearts, the Order of their Conversations, the Honour of GOD, or the true Advantage of those with whom they converse. They talk upon all Occasions, even to Dulness, about the beloved Notion; and if they can by their Talk make a Profelyte to their Opinion, their End is gain'd; it is no Concern of theirs, what Effect it hath upon the Heart and Life, nor how the Person conforms his Behavior to the plain, unerring, indisputable Rules of Living, prescrib'd in the Scriptures.

NOT That I am here drawing up an Accusation against all sober Enquiry into the Abstruse Doctrines of Christianity, or Zeal for the smallest Truth, provided it be duly temper'd; so that Men don't forget the common Frailty, don't chill and destroy that Christian Love and Charity which is the very Life of true Religion, to which

all the Truths of the Gospel do in their own Nature subserve, and should by Christians be us'd for that purpose. But I think these Men that make a Stir and Pother about Notions and Opinions, (be they never so true and of themselves never so important) whilst they are careless about the Interest of GOD in their own Souls, and the World, and shew as little Concern for the Propagation of true Godliness, (by which I mean a Life of holy Devotedness to God thro' Christ) are the most egregious Fools, and can't escape the Character of the Wicked. They really do as much Prejudice to the Interests of Religion (perhaps more) than declar'd Infidels; since Mens natural Horror at their Principles, may keep them out of the Reach of Infection by them; when on the other Hand, Mens natural Aversion to Sound Practical Religion will easily cheat them into a Perswasion, that a superficial Knowledge floating in the Brain, is the Sum of Christianity; when those that make the most Noisy Contentions about it, can content themselves with such a slight Religion, and never aim to feel the deeper Influences of their own Principles, to understand the hidden Life of the true Believer. I adjoyn, because of their Affinity

5. THE Persecutors who hate the Power of Godliness, whilst none perhaps more
zealous

- 1 Tim.* 1. 13, 15. zealous for Outside Shew and Form, and particular Opinion; and therefore will upon all Occasions, be railing at such as differ from them, and loading them with the basest Reproaches, and the highest Injuries; especially if their Lives manifest any Thing of that Powerful, Living, and Real Religion which themselves hate; and do their utmost by treacherous Arts and open Violence, to defame and ruin them: That will upon all Occasions be reproaching them for
- Luke* 22. 5. Hypocrites or Hereticks, for Enemies to U-
- Acts* 17. 6, 7. nity and Order, for Rebels against Govern- ment, and Disturbers of the Worlds Peace. And when they have thus represented them to the Prince and the People, thus dress them up in the Skins of Beasts, make themselves Sport by exposing them to the Herd, and seeing them worried and torn to Pieces: That are evermore contriving Ways to rid their Hands of those troublesome Pre- cisians, that will not let them sleep quietly in their sinful Delusions, and cheat themselves with a fatal Misperfwasion, that it is not real Piety, but a Feavourish Zeal for Some- what else, that is the necessary Way to
- Psal.* 37. 12. Heavenly Glory: That never come into
- Psal.* 42. 10. 59. 6, 7. suitable Company, but their Discourse is
57. 4. 64. some way other lac'd with bitter Scoffs and
3. 4. 5, 6. Reproaches, with false Accusations and mali- cious Slanders of their Religious Neighbours. And never fail to close up the Discourse with

an Hearty Curse of too troublesome Piety, and avow'd Resolutions to do their utmost by Slander and Forgery, and Violence, to free the Earth of such an ill humour'd Strictness as will not let them play the Devil and the Beast, without some inward Reproaches of their Conscience, that upon the Observation of the strict Conversation of others, will not fail to upbraid them with the Looseness of their own; and by its inward Torments, and Self Vexations, convince them, That the Matters of God are not to be play'd with, nor his Vengeance to be rush'd upon, without Perils of the highest Nature and Consequence: Who do their utmost to mischief them without Law, *Affs 26. 10, 11. Affs 1. 2. ch. 1 3. Est. 3. 10.* and if they can get the Countenance of Authority, will ruin without any Manner of Pity, in the most barbarous and inhumane Manner, and offer up the most Innocent to an instigated Mob, to be rob'd, insulted, tortur'd and butcher'd.

6. THE Scurrilous Person. He who without any Regard to his own Honour, the Interests of Truth, or the Common Decency that Mankind should observe in their Actions, will sport with the Follies and Mistakes of his Neighbours, and by Ludicrous Representations, endeavour to render them ridiculous: That will take the same License to sport with their Sins, and talk over the

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melancholy Subject with that mad and sport-
ful Derision, as discovers an Excess of Love
to the Sin, whilst they make their Neigh-
bours the Subject of their Mirth: Who walk
themselves by no steady Rules, and will upon
Occasion jest with their own Crimes, and en-
deavour to set them forth with that lewd and
wanton Railery, as will spur them on to
fresh Commission, that they may have fresh Oc-
casion of Sport and Laughter; and divert the
Sting of those Inward Reproaches, that would
dishearten them from the same Practices for
the Time to come: Who are ever more
indulging to a jocular Fancy, straining
their empty Heads for a Jest, but have their
Brains ever teeming with those bitter Scoffs
and stinging Railery as maintain Mirth at the
Expence of their own Innocency, their
Neighbours Honour and Fame, and char-
ge their Consciences into a dead and careless
Frame; and render them thereby dull and
useless Monitors in Cases of Sin and Duty.
Such as these who use such mad Sport, to the
Reproach of their Neighbour, the dressing
both his Follies and Sin, nay, his Vertues
themselves, in a ridiculous Shape, to the
squandering away of their Time, Innocency
and Seriousness, are another Set of wicked
Fools.

Ec. 7. 5, 6.

P[4. 69. 9,
10, 11, 12.

7. THE Malicious; whose Passions re-
dily take Fire upon the slenderest Occasion

and presently blaze out in a wasting Flame, that will spare nothing, but burn up a Neighbours Person, Estate, or good Name, without any Pity or Remorse: Such as can't be easy any longer than they are doing Mischief, by false Accusations, or suppressing that necessary Part of Truth, that gives to others the truest Character of their Neighbours: That raise Groundless Suspicions, or when they are once a-foot, use their best Endeavours to help 'em forward; and to make the Character of the Person they would defame look the more hideous, publish the worst Part thereof with the utmost Art and Passion, and either wholly conceal, or disguise all his real Beauties: That whisper about the Faults of others, and by a slight Charge of Secrecy, give Birth to the Report, and hand it on till it grow publick and notorious; whilst the first malicious Author of the Scandal is thereby conceal'd, and his Neighbour knows not how to vindicate or right himself: Such as can't forgive an Injury once done; but upon all Occasions, and in all Companies, are reciting an History of the Wrong, declaring their own Resentments of it, revenge it perhaps with a more mischievous Spite, and will in the whole of their Carriage render their own implacable Temper notorious, and discover (perhaps) a greater Inclination to stab and murder, than to forgive and be reconciled.

THE Persons mention'd in the foregoing Head, made merry with their Neighbours Faults and Follies ; which Mirth is really inconsistent with the true Principles of sober Reason ; but these Men are not only beside themselves, but indeed raving : Their own Temper will not permit them to be easy in themselves : They are sick of perpetual Disquiet, and are willing to spread the uneasy Evil all around them, vent their own Spleen, by reviling and injuring their Neighbour, to enkindle in his Breast the same Raging Passion that rages in their own : And who knows *P10.17.14.* how far a Difference in this Manner begun, may be carried ? And to what Height such a Flame will blaze, if it meets with Spirits of this sore uneasy Temper, who are apt quickly to take Fire, and have no Command over the Destructive Passion.

8. THE Designing Knave ; who is always craftily carrying on some secret Design ; hides himself from his honest well meaning Neighbour, whilst he is twisting into his Affections, prying into his Secrets, and will be sure, by some Way or other, to serve himself by him, tho' it be to his Hurt or Ruin : He that ordinarily in Discourse, disguises his Meaning ; seldom speaks out the honest and simple Perswasion of his Mind, but endeavours to insinuate into others, to learn their Sense of Things upon particu-

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ar Occasions ; and then to serve his own Designs, (whether of Malice, or Pride, Interest, or Humour) will betray his Friend, publish their private Converse, and it may be, make it speak quite different from its first Drift and Intention: Who in his Discourses with others always lies on the Reserve, that he may upon all Occasions fetch himself off, when a Charge is drawn up against him by those innocent Men, who have been wrong'd, and have suffer'd thro' his Occasion: Who takes Care to wrap up his Sense in dubious Expressions, that it can hardly be known when he doth indeed speak his Thoughts, or will by some Shifts and Evasions, warp his Words from their direct immediate Sense, when any Thing is charg'd upon him as a Fault, that is like to prove troublesome, chargeable, or perilous: He who is shuffling in his Trade and Business, and lays his Baits to entrap an unwary Dealer: That will make a Prize of his Ignorance, or Folly, and impose upon him in any Traffick or Merchandize he doth not understand: That will wheedle him into a Snare, or by any Arts whatever, that are not fair and honest, that he is asham'd to bring to the Light, will cheat a Person in his Estate or Trade; especially if he does the Mischief with the smoothest Pretences, and under a Mask of Friendship, whilst he doth really only watch his Advantage to entangle the other, and

make a Prize. Finally, (for this is sometimes the Spawn of the former Vice, Malice) *Pr. 26. 14.* when a Person hath received real or imaginary Injuries from another, will suffer the Warmth of his Temper to enkindle his Resolution for Revenge, and prosecute this Resolution by all the ways that Artful Malice can invent; so that if a fawning Friendship will expose an harmless Man the more easily to a Snare, this shall be carried on in the smoothest and most irreproachable Manner, till an Opportunity offers to gratify the Revenge, and then the Disguise shall be thrown off, and the naked Malice appear in its worst and most barbarous Shapes.

9. THE Proud Person; who puts an excessive Value upon his Body, his Endowment of Mind, his Estate, or Titles of Honour, and is upon all Occasions admiring the Strength, the Shape, or Proportion of his Body, the Air of his Face, the Fineness of his Dress, the Gaiety of his Fancy, his Stock of Knowledge, his Acquaintance with the World, the Nobility of his Descent and Relatives, or the Largeness of his Possessions; so as to impose his own Self-Esteem upon others, and perswade them to the same Admiration of himself, which his own weak Mind has entertain'd: Who thinks and talks despicably of others, to whom GOD hath deny'd so great a Stock of Knowledge,

fine a Body, so gay a Face, so large an Estate, or hath blest them with a less Measure of Pride and Vanity: Who scorns 'em as Animals of an Interior Rank, unfit for his Familiar Converse or Acquaintance, won't stoop to their Reason and Advice, tho' never so strong and cogent, if they discover any Opposition to his own Sense; but will bear all down before him, and make give Way to his imperious Dictates: That can't bear with a Contradiction; or however he may force his Patience thus far, is resolv'd to be deaf to all the Charms of Reason, and to maintain his Prejudices with the same positive Zeal as before; and therefore refuses every Thing, a serious and patient Consideration, that bids Defiance to his O W N Thoughts.

W H O can't bear the Discovery and Re-proof of his Faults and Follies, much less to have 'em censur'd or exposed, but flies in the Face of a kind Friend, that would shew him his Errors, rectify his Mistakes, point out to him the Slips of his Conduct, or would perswade him in the most Friendly Manner, to a becoming Modesty in his Opinion of himself, and his Carriage towards others. Now this Pride is the Parent of a great many other Sins: The Proud Man is of various Kinds: We'll touch on Two,

I. THE

1. THE Quarelsome Proud Man, He that is so conceited of himself (whatever Rank he holds among Men) as to snarl at all that would use with him the Freedom that is necessary among Men, for the maintaining of civil Society; and must be addrest to, upon all Occasions, with a Shew of the lowest Submission, and deepest Reverence, with an awful Sense of his Excellencies and Eminence, which bears some Proportion to his self-adoring Thoughts, forgetting that the rest of Mankind have Natures of the same

E. 1. 3. 5, 6. 2, Being, Make, Order and Power with his own, however differenc'd in some accidental Instances; and esteeming them made to be despis'd, insulted, trampled upon, according to the Dictates of his own Pride. So that in his Converse with them, he always assumes a churlish Majesty, and grows fretful and angry if they break in upon that Distance his proud Thoughts prescribe them. Who expects that all Mankind (at least within his Reach) should move according to his Thoughts, or Orders; and if these be contradicted, or transgress'd, immediately frets within, will (perhaps) quarrel with GOD, and his Substitutes in the Government of the World, reproach GOD himself, and rebel against lawful Magistrates, but to be sure will affront his Equals and Inferiors, and shew them by very sensible Arguments

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how much he resents the being contradicted, or disregarded: Who upon a Contradiction of any Sort, immediately grows warm, loses all his Temper, breaks forth into the most injurious and reproachful Language, entertains a Prejudice against the Person that opposed him, and proclaims open War to be prosecuted and carried on, with all the Acts of Spite, and Fetches of Art, that can be contriv'd; and (perhaps) closes up the Debate, with the Assault of the Person, Life or Fame of his Opposer, will do what he can to draw others into the Quarrel, make Faction, and lay a Foundation for a perpetual Sedition amongst all that come within his Reach, or Influence.

2. **THE** uncharitably censorious proud Man. He who to gratify his own Self-Esteem, always views the Actions of others thro' a false Medium, and either unjustly magnifies or lessens them, by his own selfish and ill natur'd Suspicions and Interpretations; not giving himself Leave impartially to weigh the Things themselves, and judge according to the Truth of the Case, without any Respect to the Person, or private Thoughts of others, or his own prejudicate Fancies and Opinions of 'em; but will make the fairest and most defensible, yea commendable Action (in it self) look Criminal, by sly Insinuations fetch'd from the
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Man's unknown Design, Intention and Temper, entertains some dark and Groundless Suspicions, to represent the Man and his Behaviour always Faulty and reprovab^{le}, that thereby the Opinion of himself may be maintain'd, tho' the other be degraded and vilified: Who is passing Sentence of Condemnation upon the Actions of others, before a full Enquiry into the Motives on which, and the Rules by which they proceed: Would have all the Wisdom and Goodness of the World confin'd to his own Bosom, or the Men and Manners himself affects; and can't afford the rest of Mankind fair Quarter, but always esteems and represents their Faults and Follies more notoriously Criminal than they are in 'emselv^{es}; and subtracts from their good Deeds by Evil Suspicions, sinister Interpretations, and rash Censures of the Ends, Motives and Principles of their Actions; when they do Good doth what he can to make their Actions look evil; when they do amiss, uses his utmost Industry to magnify the Fault. In fine, such as love to place themselves in the Seat of Judgment, to scan the Behaviour of others, play the Critick thereupon, and not only enquire into it so far as it is notorious and plain, but to frame and defend very dishonest Suspicions of what is entirely undiscovered and unknown.

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T H A T such as these are proud Fools, I think I need not go about to prove. It must certainly be a very fond Esteem of themselves, that prompts them to gad Abroad, and act the Censors on others, when a juster Survey of themselves, and a fuller Acquaintance at Home, would shame such a censorious Humour, no Persons Actions in the World being more unfit to be critically enquir'd into, than his, who is perpetually criticising upon, and censuring the Actions of others.

N O R must I pass over here a more conspicuous Folly, deriv'd at once from Levity and Pride; when Persons do on the most trivial Occasions, thus affect to be Censors: When other Peoples Dress, or Gesture, or Mode of Pronunciation, or Form of Body, or Features, become the Subject of their Criticisms, and exercise their graver Censures. When such a Dress is displeasing, 'tis simple, rustick, tawdry; such an Air or Mien is flat and clownish; such a Body is disproportion'd and mishapen; such a Tone of Pronunciation; such a Phrase is not gentile or modish. Oh! How wisely do Rational Creatures, *Christians* (so called) pass away their Time, and busy their Thoughts in gratifying such a Childless Pride! Are these Subjects fit for the busy Employment of a dying Man's Thoughts, that is hastning away to a vast Eternity,

is upon the very Brink of a Change, that hath such weighty Concerns to fill up his Thoughts and Time, as the Securing an everlasting Interest in another Life, and the Salvation of a precious Soul, worth more than the whole World ; and compar'd with which, the Form, the Furniture, the Dress and Cloathing of a vile Body is no more than the waving of a Feather:

10. **THE Glutton and Drunkard.** He that gives the loose Rein to his Appetite in this Case, resolving to lay it under no Restraints, confine it within no Bounds ; or if some Principles of Education, some Notions of Honour, and regard to Fame, may on some Occasions, restrain hm, is yet so intent upon the Gratification of his Appetite, that at all other Seasons he will indulge it to the full : That will drink away his Reason and Health, or if he be strong to drink, strong Drink will yet still pour in, for the meer Pleasure of an insatiable Appetite, that is but enrag'd by feeding, and instead of being satisfied, craves the more, and the more eagerly too, even when it is tir'd and faint, and hath in a very great Measure, lost its true Taste and Relishes : Whose voluptuous Soul esteems it the chief Felicity of his Life to eat and drink, to humour his Appetite with Dainties, with elaborate and studied Viands, or luscious Wines,

Isa. 5. 11,
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Isa. 56. 13.

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Wines, and can dream of no other Heaven than what is made up of these Delights : Who is therefore snatching at all Occasions, to drench and cram himself, and to invite and force others to revel after the same mad Rate, on Corporal Pleasures : That talks of costly Entertainments and delicious Fare, with as much Transport, as if he were reciting the Raptures of Heaven; nay, much greater than himself would express at such a Recital; and can't endure to have any Interruption in the charming History, or to have his Thoughts diverted to any other unpleasing Subject : That hates to think of crossing these Appetites, abhors and cries, Away with that Religion that would rob him of his Pleasures : But let him have his Cups and Dishes, his Luscious Meats and Wines, and the Delicacies studied for the humouring wanton Palates : And let who will have the Heaven in Reversion talk'd of in GOD's Holy Word, he can't stay till hereafter, but is with the Epicure, for making a short Life as merry as he can. *Let us eat and drink for to morrow we die.* Or if they be not so far lost to all common Reason, as thus blasphemously to speak out His Thoughts and Intentions, yet doth by His Course of Life, give very broad Signs that it is the Inward radical Sense of His Heart, and that he is resolv'd to follow the Motions of a raving

Hab. 2. 15.

1 Cor. 15.

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raving Appetite, and humour it to the utmost; he darkens the Eye of His Mind, stupifies His Conscience, dishonours His GOD, wasts His Estates, degrades himself into a Brute, shuts himself out of Heaven, and exposes himself to the Wrath of GOD, to the certain, lasting, intollerable, and unintermiting Torments of Hell.

11. THE Lustful : Who gives himself up freely to the Command of imperious Lust, and ranges into all the By-Paths, the endless Mazes and Intricacies of a wandering Love ; and pertinaciously exposes himself to all the Fatigues, to all the Danger, Terror and Perplexity, on which such an unbounded Appetite will hurry him : That studies, contrives, and looks out Occasions and Objects, to humor his Lust, and to enrage it : And can talk of nothing with as much Satisfaction as of a lewd Debauch ; of his Projects for his beastly Pleasures, or of the past Adventures of his Lust : And will be sure to insert some of it in all Discourses, and on all Occasions to vomit forth the filthy Scum that floats on his Mind, and is ever most ready to be presented to the Light of Day : Who can be pleas'd with no Company or Conversation but what winks at, or indulges this Brutal Humour, and makes it his Business to propagate the filthy Inclination, and induce others to a Life of the same gross and filthy

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Pleasures : Who will hearken with Pleasure to all those Histories, Plays, Romances, Songs, that will humour his Lust, and propagate and spread the Irreligious Passion. Who will make such Persons his pleasing Society, as will most enflame him; and endeavours by his Wit and Raillery, his wanton Actions and Discourses, to infect and poyson all that come within his Reach. In fine; Such as the Prophet describes, *That assemble in Troops* Jer. 5. 7, 8. *in the Harlots Houses, that are like fed Horses, each neighing after his Neighbours* !Wise. i. c. That take Care to pamper and feed their Lust, by Luxury in Meat, and Drink, and Apparel, and by taking all Occasions that offer, to fan the lustful Fire that works within, that it may blaze out in the most dangerous and wasting Flame.

12. THE Prodigal. He who reckons himself Lord of his own Estate, that he may do with it what he pleases, and squander it away in what vain Expences, on what vain Projects he will, without being accountable to any, or ever examining for what Ends an Estate should be spent: That in all Companies, and on all Occasions, is free and ready to scatter his Treasure, without enquiring into the Reason of his Expence; and will gratify the Lavish Humour, tho' it be to the Dishonour of GOD, the Distast of his Friends, the Hurt of himself, the Ru-

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in of his Estate, tho' he reduces himself to extream Poverty, or disgraceful Beggary, by his wild Profusion: Who reckons himself an Abyss of Treasure, scorns therefore to regard the Waists made on his Estate, or to look forward to approaching Beggary, but as long as it lasts, will merrily expend it, tho' he reproachfully begs and starves at last.

N A Y, I must conclude under this Head, the Person that doth not make Waste in his Estate; if he doth in this unaccountable Manner, expend his Yearly Incomes; if he lavishes out them without any serious Prospect or after-thought; or if upon a thoughtful Review he feels the Inward Gnawings and Reproaches of his Mind, will yet on the next Occasion, forget all these Conscious Upgradings, and be as extravagant and wastful as he was before.

AND much more must He be included here, that to gratify this profuse Humour, will make Seizure of what is not his own; that is (perhaps) under Age, the Governance of and Direction of Parents and Friends, and yet without their Privity or Consent, will lay hold on all he can, to humour his expenceful Vanity; that in *Solomon's Words*,
Pr.28. 24. robbeth his Father and Mother, and saith it is no Transgression. And no Profusion is great-

er or more unaccountable, than that of Gaming, when Persons will at all Hazards squander away Estates, without any Rational Prospect, or any valuable Consideration; so that among the Prodigals, we must reckon the Gamester as the most Eminent and Notorious Fool of all.

13. THE Idle Person may come next, because of his Affinity with the foregoing. He who lives as if he had been made to walk *Pro. 18. 9.* about, and waste away Precious Time in doing nothing: That never considers how *1 Tim. 5.* valuable and Important, Time is, nor how *13.* it ought to be spent; but casts off all serious Thought about Business, as what will no way suit a ranging unconfined Humour: Makes his Life one continued Diversion and Removal from every Thing that is serious, and wou'd employ his Thoughts, or his Hands; to whom Confinement for an Hour is Irksome; whose chief Study seems to be, how he may do nothing:

INDEED, that, strictly speaking, is impossible; the Devil will fill their Hands with Work, who endeavour as much as they can to empty 'emselves of all Concern for Business. If they will not be employ'd in GOD's Service, or their own, he'll make 'em Drudge for him, and busy them in the vilest Servitude. It is not possible for so active a Being as the Soul of

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Man, to slumber away Life in one perpetual Doziness, or State of Non-Action. But when Persons altogether neglect the Business which GOD sent them into the World for, and the Business which a due Regard to themselves or Families, advise them to mind, they are they idle. They do nothing, (shall I say?) they do much worse than nothing. They make their Lives one entire Vacation: And tho' the Devil will find them perpetual Employment, and make their Empty Heads the Forge of many a vain Design, will indeed wear 'em out in his Drudgery; yet they gratify themselves with being his idle Slaves. They gladly divert from their own useful Work, the Work of GOD and their Generation, to be employed on his most ruinous and (many Times) reproachful Designs and Services.

14. I M A Y subjoyn naturally to the former, the Busy-Body: He that will mind his own Business of his own, being the most fit to be a troublesome Intermedler with the Affairs of others. Who having nothing to do for themselves, and yet must be employed about somewhat, will therefore be troublesome to others, with the rejected Offers of that Service of theirs, which is worth nothing. They'll do nothing for themselves but none more prompt and free, and willing to trouble others with their imper-

2 *Thef.* 3.

Pro. 20. 3.

ent Services; and for this Purpose will associate with them, pry into their Secrecies, over-hear their Business, interpose, direct and meddle where they are no Ways concern'd, nor safely to be trusted: Who will spread abroad, for Want of other Employment, whatever they are thus made privy to, and thereby many Times, turn a Vicinage, yea, a Town, a Country, a Kingdom, upside down; and who by carrying Tales from one to another, will gradually weaken the mutual Confidence of the dearest and truest Friends, render them by Degrees, the most deadly Enemies; and procure a Separation between them that will never more be closed. In short, who never enquire whether their Service is regarded, their Persons esteemed, their Offers willingly and kindly accepted; little heed whether the Persons who employ them, are pleas'd or displeas'd, gratified or affronted, serv'd or ruin'd, so they themselves be Intermedlers: Never heed what the Consequence of their Business may be, provided they are busied. *Pro. 16. 28*

15. THE sportful Waster of Precious Time: He who having no Deep and Saving Persuasions, of the Worth of his Soul, or the Preciousness of Time, wherein he must get the Happiness thereof secur'd, consumes it in idle Sports and Plays, which (as an excellent

cellent Person saith) are stigmatiz'd by the Idlers themselves, with the Infamous Name of Pastimes; and are contriv'd, and us'd for no other End, but to gratify a prophane, lewd, soft, sensual, cruel or empty Mind: Such as are Cards, and Dice, and Wakes, and Revels, and May-Games, promiscuous Dancings and Stage Plays, Cock-fightings; and he who could have no Delight in Life, if it were not sauc'd with these Frothy and Fulsome Pleasures; nor can take so much Satisfaction in any Society as that of such who will joyn with him in these sportful Wasts of precious Time: Who hates to be confin'd an Hour at a Sermon, or to hear Christians with serious Pleasure, discourse of the great Things of GOD, their Souls, and a coming Eternity; but cou'd dwell at a Play-House or at a Cock-match, at a Ball, or a Musick-House, &c. and never be tir'd with the Insipid and Airy Pleasure, and does what he can to invite and persuade others to the same Course and Rate of Living.

Nay, be the Recreation never so justifiable in it self, yet he that uses it immoderately, is to be reckoned a Fool: And he uses Recreation immoderately, that wasts away precious Time therein, without any Concern to fit himself by it, for the Service of GOD, by rendring his Mind more free and lively, and chearful, in the Exercises of Religion: That uses Recreation of

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any sort, for the meer Pleasure thereof, without any farther Prospect, such as becomes a Person, that by solemn Profession is devoted to G O D. And how much all Sports when thus immoderately used, tend to render the Mind soft and sensual, stupid and careless, is evident from the Lives and Conversations of such as are most addicted to them. The trifling Meanness of their Thoughts and Converse at best, and in many Cases the Froth and Fulsome Lewdness of it, and their utter Abhorrence of, and therefore Unfitness for, the spiritual Services of Christianity (which the more they addict themselves to this Course of Life, grow still the more hateful to them) are so many sad Proofs of the melancholy Issue of such a sportful Life: So that Persons have Need of no more than their own Experience (if they had the Power and Patience to look into themselves) to convince themselves of their Folly and Madness, in being diverted from the great Business they have to do with G O D, in Order to secure for themselves a Blessed Eternity, and save their Souls, by such a Course of Mirth and Pleasure.

I MIGHT here add the covetous Person; who talks of nothing with Pleasure, but his Estate and Gains, his perishing Riches and Treasure. The Ambitious who courts (with more Ardour than the Christian,

tian (alass!) seeks for Heaven) the field of Favour, the empty Commendations and Applauses of his giddy Fellow-Creatures : But I forbear, and shall only add, because I will comprehend all the rest.

16. THE Irreligious Person. By whom I mean Him, who hath only a negative Religion; who perhaps is guilty of few or no Vices we have already reckon'd up, but in the mean Time, hath no solid Virtue, no real Grace, no Love and Devotedness to GOD, no Faith in CHRIST, no renewed sanctified Heart. But in his whole Conversation, discovers a secret Enmity against GOD, a Frame of Mind quite opposite to the Temper and Tendency of the real Christian, whatever the particular Sin be, that reigns in his Heart, and sways him. With whom you may converse throughout your Life, and never hear a Word tending to Edification, any serious Discourse about his GOD, his Soul, the Heavenly Inheritance, his Hopes, his Concern for Eternity, or the Path he must tread out to Glory; but fills his Head perhaps, with empty Notions, his Time with Airy Disputes, but takes Care that the little Religion he hath, don't sink too deep into his Mind, and affect his Heart, or discover any Thing of the Power and Life of Religion in his Practice, any Concern

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GOD's Glory, or his own Salvation. Or else lives utterly regardless of all Religion, not affecting so much as a Shew of it; but is perpetually troubling himself and others, with News, Business, or other low Toys, which make no more Musick in the Christian's Ears, who lives in View of Eternity, than Rattles; indeed, displeases them with an ungrateful Din, (I mean when he is excessively thus entertain'd.)

NOT but that such Things as these may in due Measure, and at a proper Season, be discours'd of. Christians have Worldly Business to mind, a Concern they should have for the Church, and the World, they must of Necessity therefore sometimes think and talk about these Matters. They may be sometimes allow'd a little innocent Diversion, for the necessary Relaxation of their Minds, that they may carry on their proper Work with the greater Ease, and Cheerfulness, and Pleasure. But they should by their Conversation, discover that they have much better Things in View; that they live for another World, that they do not reckon themselves settled here, but expect a Removal to a better, far better *Heavenly Country*.

AND here I can scarce forbear inveighing against the Dulness, Unbelief and Cowardice, that in this frozen Age, stops the Mouths of true Christians, and suppresses

the Discourse of those great and weighty Things ; but this is plain from the Doctrines of the Scriptures, That as far as Persons are herein guilty, so far they play the Fool. But he who lives in a continual Diversion from the great Business of a Christian's Life, that never thinks seriously of Heaven, or the Way thither, is as well as all the Fore-mentioned, a notorious Fool, being forgetful of one great End for which he was made : His Society, as well as theirs, is justly to be esteemed hurtful and ruinous. I proceed,

II. TO shew who is to be reputed a *Companion of Fools*. And this is a proper and necessary Enquiry, because it can't be reasonably thought, that all such as upon any Occasion converse with them, are in this Danger: Sure, they don't poyson the Air, and kill with their very Aspect and Breath? The Apostle's Interpretation of his own Advice to the *Corinthians*, concerning the incestuous Person, will help us here.

1 Cor. 5. 9, 10. *" I wrote you (saith he) in an Epistle, not to keep company with Fornicators, yet not altogether with the Fornicators of this World, or with the covetous, or with the Extortioners, or with the Idolaters, for then must ye needs go out of the World. If their Company were to be abandoned entirely, if upon no Occasion, they were to be mingled with, Christians must*

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seek out some uninhabited Land, and transport themselves; and because real Religion and Piety are not communicated from Parents to Children, every new Succession must afresh transplant, which GOD hath no Way required; and indeed were it once done, would bring a quick Destruction upon the rest of the World; since 'tis GOD's Regard to his Chosen, Intermingled with the Wicked, that restrains his Fury, which would otherwise break out on the World of the Ungodly, and consume them at once. And GOD hath been pleased to put Business into the Hand of his People to manage, and by his Providence so mixt them with others, that 'tis impossible for them wholly to avoid their Society.

BE SIDES, the *Christian* Religion does not banish Humanity out of the Earth. *Christians* owe common Human Respect and Love, even to the most wicked, because of the Common Principles of Reason, in which they agree, and those Remains of GOD's Image that yet continue in their Minds undefac'd: Yea, they ought in all their Offices of Respect, to use a Friendly Freedom with them, such as will discover their Love to be real and unforc'd, such as in Conjunction with their other Behaviour, will manifest them to be much wiser, and better Friends, than those they have chosen for their
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dear Associates : And when they avoid their
 Society, should use all proper Methods to
 convince them that it is not Disrespect to
 them, but a Concern for G O D's Honour,
 and their own Salvation, that advises them
 thereto. So that *Christians* must not use
 the Wicked for their Familiars, with the
 same Esteem and Affection, that they have
 for their Fellow Members of the same Fa-
 mily of G O D : Yet are they to shew to
 them the Respect which is due to Men
 of the same Capacities and Nature. Yea,
 this Respect should be greatned by the true
 Tenderneſs of a Christian Affection, and
 should discover it self by a Willingneſs to
 oblige them by all due Civility and pro-
 per Acts of Kindneſs; yea, and comply
 with them, where it may be done without
 Prejudice to themselves, Companions, or
 the Honour of their L O R D, which muſt
 weigh more with them than all other Con-
 ſiderations whatſoever. We read, that our
 Saviour himſelf was preſent at a Marriage
 Feaſt, and converted Water into Wine af-
 ter Men had well drank. He ſhew'd his Hu-
 manity, by being at the Feaſt upon Invi-
 tation. And tho' he had a further Regard
 to his Diſciples, by being there, and for
 their Sakes wrought this Miracle, yet we
 can't imagine he would thus far have com-
 ply'd with the Invitation; much leſs that
 he would have furniſh'd them with more
 Wine

John 2. 7,
 8, 9, 10.
 11.

v. 11.

Wine when Men had drank freely, if it were not lawful to be present at a Feast among wicked Persons, and be innocently free and Friendly in their Society there. So that we must except here such a Conversation with the Wicked as is necessary for the carrying on of Worldly Business, or to shew that Christianity hath not alter'd the Man for the worse, but that he hath by it acquir'd a further Capacity, and Readiness for the Discharge of all truly Human Offices.

MUCH more must we except all prudent Conversation with the Wicked, which is designed for their Reformation and real Spiritual Advantage. Such was our Saviour's Conversation with Publicans and Harlots, with which the self-justifying and boasting-*Pharisees* reproach'd him, and in which he is to be imitated as far as possible, by his Ministers.

*Mat. 11.
19. compared with
Mat. 9. 10.
11, 12, 15.*

BUT what is it then we are here to understand by a *Companion of Fools*? Whom are we to repute such? Why in short, He is one, who for no justifiable Ends, doth frequently and pleasedly associate with such, and choose them for his Companions. A Man may converse with such frequently on the good Design before-mentioned, and carry it pleasedly towards them; nay, with a Shew of the warmest Affection, as long as his Prospect of doing Good thereby continues, without

without being deservedly reputed their Companion. He may have to do with them frequently, in carrying on his Worldly Business, when he doth neither choose their Society, nor is pleas'd therein. He may (when he is in such Company) discover himself pleas'd, if he can do so innocently, tho' he won't frequently adjoyn himself to it. He may in his Business, and in common Acts of Friendship, be both their frequent and pleas'd Companion, when he is not so by Choice, but prefers other Society far before it, and can with more Pleasure adjoyn himself thereto. But he that without any justifiable Reason, can frequently and pleas'dly use such Converse, and choose and prefer it, is the *Companion of Fools* here spoken of; who is so much endanger'd by his Society. By this Explication it seems that the Description must be taken entirely to give us a compleat Character of the Person we describe; yet it will not be improper to consider its several Parts. I say then that, the Person who in our Text is called a *Companion of Fools* is one that

1. Associates with them frequently.
2. He doth it with Pleasure and Delight.
3. He doth it without any valuable Reasons.
4. He

4. He doth it out of Choice. Let us a little consider each.

1. *A Companion of Fools* is one that frequently associates with such. He makes it his Practice, and his Course of Life. In common Discourse he is not called the Companion of others, who hath once and again been in their Company, but then ceases to frequent it: Nor are we so to understand it in this Case. A Man may unwarily and accidentally be cast upon them, but in a little while withdraws from them, and deserts the Society, he is not thereupon to be reckon'd one of the Members, or accounted their Companion. But he that uses their Company not only once, but frequently, constantly adjoyns himself to them, as often as his Leisure from Business will give Leave, or he can spare the Time from the necessary Affairs that sometimes withhold him; and will sometimes break thro' some of his Business to enjoy the Society: That always uses his best Endeavours to make one of the Club when they are together, and as often as he can, converses with them singly, is most justly to be adjudg'd to the Society. He is by some very forcible Tye and Engagement, a Member of it. Let the Persons be Fools in whatever of the Fore-mentioned Instances, whether Infidel or Profane,

phane, or Knave, or Lewd, or Prodigal, or Idle, &c. He who doth in this Manner frequent their Society, is certainly a Companion of theirs.

2. *A Companion of Fools* doth associate with them with Pleasure: I mean not only a Pleasure springing from the *Christian's* joyful Sense of performing the Duties of Civility to Men of the same Natural Capacities and Powers, but from an Inward Suitableness to a Society thus qualified, and a Relish of their Converse. So that he longs for the Company when absent; and when present, could spend Days, nay Years, his whole Life with them, without tiring (shall I say) or rather wishing to be tir'd: Tho' the Mind will by Degrees, abhor the trivial or Brutish Pleasure, the Man falls out with his tiring Faculties, and would fain have the Pleasure maintain'd throughout his Life, in its highest Relishes. He feels no Loathing of their Sins and Follies, but is tickled and gratified with the empty and wicked Converse; could dwell with them, and when he is constrain'd to leave them and seperate from his Society, doth it with Unwillingness, against which he can only be reliev'd by the Thoughts of renewing the delightful Society on another Season. He can meet with no such Entertainment by himself, or with any others as with them.

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even when they rant at the highest Rate, and play the Fool in the most Egregious Manner. Such a Person not only frequents the Society, but makes one of them with his whole Heart.

N A Y, we must add here, that he who is knit to the Company with true Affection, tho' he doth not frequently adjoyn himself to them, because necessary Business will not give Leave: Who when he is with them expresses the highest Satisfaction, that he can have so much Vacation for the Enjoyment of them, must be accounted a Companion of theirs; because altho' some urgent Business constrain him, against his own Inclination, and to his Displeasure, to be absent, yet his Soul is with them; he languishes perhaps, or feels at least an Inward Grief that he is withheld from such Company.

3. *A Companion of Fools* associates with 'em, without any valuable Reasons, without proposing to himself any Good End, by the proper and free Bent and Tendency of his own Nature. So that he can give no other Reason for it, besides a certain Suitedness to the Company, which he feels within: Never examines into, or weighs the Motives that brings him amongst them; only he feels a secret, but strong Impulse upon him, which carries him thither, and detains him there; and when once he is engaged,

gag'd, is so wholly taken up, that he never attends to the Motives that push him forward, or the Principles that act him. But as Beasts of the same Nature and Quality, by a secret Instinct, without the Guidance or Conduct of Reason, Herd together: So he having suffer'd his Reason to be charm'd asleep, and thereby render'd useles, is now led on by the Powerful Influence of a vitiated Nature, to accompany Men of the same Principles. There are some secret Charms that bewitch him, that at once allure and fasten him. He can no Way account for his Behaviour, but by telling you, that 'tis Nature and Temper, and Inclination, and some Secret, he knows not what, that hurries him on without any sober Thought or Consideration.

Pro. 17. 14.

SO that he hath neither Business to justify him, and much less hath he any Design to do Good amongst them, by convincing them of their eminent Folly and Wickedness, and using Perswasions with them to bring them off from their evil Way: Nor is it a decent Civility he sometimes pays to them as Men; but 'tis some endearing Charm fastens him to the Society. In one Word, he loves them and joyns himself to them for no other Reason, but because he is hurry'd on by the commanding Instinct of that Blind Principle.

4. *A Companion of Fools* associates with them out of Choice, not barely by the Necessity of his Business, or to testify his Respect to them as Men, whilst he by no Means approves the Society, or chooses it; nor can be confin'd to it without Regret, any farther than these Considerations may abate of the *Tedium*, and render it somewhat less wearisom: But he doth it out of Choice, because he prefers the Society; he loves it, delights in it, chooses it before all others: Not by a Choice *pro hic & nunc*, on the present Occasion, as a good Man may choose the Company of a Wicked Person before that of one truly Religious, when he has Business with the Former, and not with the Latter; or whilst he hath a Prospect of doing him good, and associates with him on that Design; but by a Choice made by a settled Preference of Esteem: Nor do I mean that this should be so settled a Preference, as that he should never feel any Renitency within, some dying Persuasion of the Injustice, Folly, and Madness of such a Preference, or never form any faint and languishing Resolutions to renounce it, and make a wiser Choice. But I intend such a settled Preference, that if the Mind goes a little wavering with such a Thought, doth again overpoise it, and bring the Man back with a free and pleasing

pleasing Association with the same Company. So that it hath his highest practical Esteem, he doth apparently take more Pleasure therein, and when left to his free Choice, will abandon all other Company whatever, for the Enjoyment of that; yea, reckons it a Confinement, Restraint, Imprisoement, to endure any other Society, or to be withheld by any Things, Persons, or Business from the valued Enjoyment. He is never so easy, so pleas'd, so free, elsewhere as among them; he is more uneasy in himself, more irksome and displeasing to all around him.

SUCH a Person as this, who in the Manner describ'd, uses the Society of wicked Fools, is justly to be reputed their Companion. Yea, he who doth in one of these Instances (as we have open'd their Meaning) associate with wicked Persons, is to be esteem'd a Companion of theirs. If he doth frequent their Company, if he be tickled and pleas'd therewith, and feels an Inward Satisfaction springing up in his Mind, when he is with them; if without Consideration of the Reasons by which he proceeds, by a natural Tendency of his own Inclination, he be led to them, if he doth in this practical Esteem prefer the Society, tho' he doth not constantly frequent it, tho' he may to cheat himself, Forge some Motives to induce him into their Company, some Rea-

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sons to excuse his being there, is certainly a *Companion of Fools*; and in the ready Way to be destroy'd, be the wicked Persons with whom he associates of what Nature or Kind soever, and guilty in whatever of the fore-mentioned Instances; which we proceed in the

III. Place to make appear; to prove to you, that such a *Companion of Fools* is in the ready Way to certain Ruin. And here it might not be improper to look over particularly, all the forementioned Instances of wicked Folly; and shew you in what Manner the Society of such tends to the Ruin of those that use it. But not designing here a full Discourse, I shall not descend to any particular Consideration, but content myself with such general Hints as I think will fully evidence the Truth.

HOWEVER, 'tis proper to tell you, That I take the Word *Ruin* here, in the most large and comprehensive Sense; as including under it every Thing that is mischievous; not one particular Calamity or Evil, but a General Destruction of the whole Man; Soul and Body, in this and in a future World. Tho' the Ruin of the Soul (especially in a future Life) be that which should most affect the Man, and deserves the most serious Consideration, yet such Society not only threatens that with Destruction, but also to make

Wast on the Estate, bring Decay and Death upon the Body, a Reproach on the Person, to defame and degrade him, pine him with Sickness or Poverty, and will kill him at the Last.

H O W E V E R, the Ruin brought upon him by such a Society, is not effected by one Method of Action : Sometimes it proceeds from Contagious Propagation; himself takes the Distemper from them, and sickens and dies : Sometimes he only exposes himself to a Ruin wholly from without, to which himself contributes nothing besides a foolish and an unwary thrusting into the Society. Thus the Malicious, and Knavish, and Proud, and Quarrellsome, hurt and ruin many without communicating their Malice, and Knavery, and Pride, and fiery Temper, to those with whom they converse. Tho' really there is scarcely one of all the Instances we have mention'd, but what is Contagious, and more effectually and infallibly destroys by communicating the same Dispositions to those with whom they associate. But having hinted thus much for the clearing our Way I think the Truth may be manifested by the following Considerations.

1. THE Fools here, (of which we have given you some Account) are themselves in the ready Way to Ruin:

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2. **BELOVED** and pleasing Society, powerfully induce the Companion to the same Course of Life with themselves.

3. **GOD** doth oftentimes punish, and Men commonly form their Judgments of Societies in the Lump, (if I may so express it) without making any Discrimination.

4. **I N** Cases of Difficulty, wicked Companions use to give very hurtful and ruinous Advice.

5. And Lastly. **W H E N** the Companion is in greatest Distress, and most needs their Assistance, they generally desert him; and have neither Will nor Power to afford him any.

1. **T H E** Fools here spoken of, are themselves in the ready Way to Ruin. 'Tis needless sure to go about to prove, that many of the Persons we have mentioned are hast'ning away to certain Destruction. 'Tis evident of all of them, (since they live under the Reigning Power of some one or more Sins, and are therefore under **G O D**'s Curse, and liable to his Wrath) that they are hast'ning away to everlasting Misery, unless **G O D** doth by his Grace, stop them in their Way, and change their Hearts and course of Li-

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ving. There is no one Truth more plainly reveal'd in the Book of GOD, nor more agreeable to the common Principles of Reason, than that such as live under the Dominion and Power, in the habitual and customary Practice of Sin (one Sin against GOD) are wicked Persons; nor any Thing more evident, than that such are condemn'd by his Law, and continuing such, unrelievable by the Gospel; and therefore of Necessity, expos'd to everlasting Misery and Ruin, both of Soul and Body, in a future Life.

AND indeed, 'tis evident to Reason, visible in Experience, asserted in Scripture, *Pr. 23. 22.* that many of them are on the Road to Temporary Ruin in this Life, to Poverty, and *29. 30. Pr. 6. 26. 43.* Shame, and Pain, and Sickness, and a great *Pr. 19. 15.* many other Evils and Calamities of the present Life. Thus the Glutton and Drunkard, and Lustful, and Idle, are on the high Road to Dishonour and Shame, and Beggary; to miserable Rottenness, Distempers, and Death. And I need not tell you, how many of this Sort of Fools, have for a short Season made a mighty Blaze, consum'd their Estates, Beggar'd their Families, poyson'd and rotted their Bodies, and hurry'd themselves away like Madmen to the Grave. How many of them have been despis'd and reproach'd whilst alive, and in Anguish of Conscience, and terrible Despair, as well as under the usual aggravated Torments of Intemperance;

temperance, have yielded up their Souls to Justice, and been dragg'd away to the dreadful Tribunal of GOD.

AND the Consequences of many of the other Vices are as Fatal, and as obvious, tho' Pr. 22: 5. not so much attended to. The Malicious, Proud, and Quarrelsome, and busy Fool, is expos'd to a great many Mischiefs in the present Life, lives avoided and abhor'd, carries about with him a fretted Mind and a raging Conscience, brings upon himself first Hatred, and then Ruin, and dies at last under the same Disrepute and Abhorrence in which he liv'd.

AND a Course of notorious and gross Vice is commonly begun in a Breach of GOD's Holy Day, a slight of his Worship and Ordinances, and grows compleat in Rampant Profaness and downright Infidelity. So that it is as evident of them, as of all the foregoing, that their Tendency is ruinous and destructive; not to observe to you that GOD doth in the common Course of Providence punish many, or most, or all of these Sins; especially profane Contempt of himself, and Name, and Day, by immediate Judgments, besides the natural and necessary Tendencies of the Vices themselves.

AND tho' the Knave may seem to promise fair for an Estate in the present World, and doth oftentimes procure it, yet many Times the Curse of GOD renders all his

Knaveish Cunning unprosperous. He generally hurries himself away from that Beloved World which upon any Terms he will
Jer. 17. 11. make his own, and entails Infamy, Disgrace,
Pf. 55. 23. Shame and Poverty, on his Posterity.

2. BELOVED and pleasing Society do for the most Part very powerfully induce such as accompany them, to the same Course of Living with them. There is a strange Propension in Human Nature to Society, strange Charms in Friendship and the mutual Interchanges of Love: So that nothing is more Natural, than for Persons, at all Adventures, and on all Occasions, to defend their beloved Friends. The Passion of Love having been in all Ages upon this Account, reputed a blind one. It sees no Faults in the Beloved, however gross ones may in Reality be committed by him; or if these are too notorious to be overlook'd, Love doth strangely extenuate and lessen them: So that a Vice which in another can't be beheld, or talk'd of without Horrour, loses much of its hideous Form when committed by a Person belov'd. It doth on the other Hand, create many imaginary Beauties and Charms, and dresses out the Beloved on all Occasions, to the highest Advantage, grows impatient, if any Thing be said to his Prejudice or Dishonour. And 'tis obvious how easy a Transition it is from this Love and

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Approbation, to the Imitation of his Way of living. So justly doth the *Apostle* tell us
Evil Communications corrupt good Manners. 1 Cor. 15.

NAY, this Society comes recommended 33.
 to the greatest Advantage, by that strange Degeneracy and Corruption which hath overspread the Human Nature since the Fall; which hurries him away with a violent Current of Affection to forbidden Objects, 19.
 Company, and Pleasures. So that he carries with him wherever he goes, a great Suitableness to vitious Society; insomuch that their Vices meet with the secret Approbation of his corrupted Heart, which induces him fondly to affect their Company: And 'tis no Wonder if his Love for the Company, should very much tend to enflame and improve his natural Corrupt and evil Disposition: No Wonder that when Oyl, or the most easily Inflammable Materials be cast on the Fire, it should blaze forth with the more Force and Fury. So that by a Sort of reciprocal Impulse, the Man's own naturally evil Heart hurries him into this Society, and fastens him to it with Delight, and the Society radicates, confirms and improves this evil Disposition of his; and thereby renders him still more fond of the Company, more warm for, and more pleas'd with the Enjoyment of it.

AND tho' it be true, many of the particular Fools we have mentioned, seem to have

have no Charms to endear their Society; such as the Proud and Knavish, and Malicious, and impertinently Busy; yet 'tis very rarely (if ever) that one Vice reigns alone: Ordinarily there is a Complexion of Evils Tyrannizing in that Mind where one is allowed an uncontroll'd Dominion; and hereupon, tho' the first Inducement to accompany with them, may be of a Nature quite different from the Reigning Vice, yet *Pr. 22. 24,* gradually such very hateful Tempers are *25. Ps. 106.* spread thro' the Society, and by a very fatal Contagion, the rest of the Company transformed into the same Frightful Fools. And there is no one particular Vice in the World, of which Human Nature is not susceptible, to which it hath not an innate Proneness, (if it be not rectify'd and cured by Grace,) provided there be Opportunity and Tentations to set Fire to the prepar'd Materials within.

UPON the whole, it is no Wonder if a Person should gradually (indeed by a short Ascent) become like his sinful Beloved Associates, when not only Man's natural Inclination to Society, and the Love to the Companions which is easily grafted thereon induces him, powerfully inclines him to such a Resemblance; but also the more powerful Instinct of a Corrupted Nature, that snatches at all Occasions to spread it self farther

turther, and grow to a more confirm'd Malignity.

A N D now from these two Considerations laid together, will result a very full Proof of the dangerous and ruinous Influence of wicked Company. The wicked themselves are in a ruinous Condition from their very Frame, Temper, and Tendency; and they naturally communicate the same Deformities and Distempers, to those with whom they converse, defile, pollute, and infect them; and then it is no Wonder they shou'd be expos'd to the same Mischief and Ruin.

H O W E V E R, that the Matter may be made yet more fully evident, because some unwary Persons may joyn themselves to the Society, and not presently see the dangerous Plague overspreading them, and may thereupon be induc'd to think they are out of Danger; (Tho' I believe all will find, if they give themselves Leave to think, that the very Society is Infectious, (even when they are kept somewhat within Bounds by the Restraints of a soberer Presence) and leaves (at least) a Disrelish in the Mind of nobler and better Things, if a very strict Guard be not kept. I add,

3. G O D doth oftentimes punish, and Men commonly form their Judgment of Societies in the Lump, (if I may so express it) with-

out making any Discrimination. That such is the Method of Men in judging, is evident from these Proverbial Speeches, to this Purpose, amongst most Civiliz'd Nations, signifying, That no better Judgment can be form'd of the Man, than by observing what Company he keeps. So that whatever the Man's Associates be, himself is esteem'd one of the same Temper, as well as one of the same Club, and thereupon treated as such. So that it is evident, he must bear a Share of their Infamy, and will be dealt with by others with the same Caution and Distrust, will be esteem'd by them as dangerous and hateful, as fit to be scorn'd shun'd, as the Society with whom he comforts. So that if their Practices tend to Disgrace, and Shame, and Ruin, to the Loss of their Credit among Men, and to all the ill Consequences that follow thereupon, he must expect to be involv'd in the Calamity, and suffer with his Associates. Not to tell, how many Times their too fond Love for a dear Companion, engages them unwarily, in very hurtful and ruinous Designs, and Encounters for the prosecuting his Quarrel, and exposes them to Punishment, when themselves were (perhaps) scarce Actors, or accessory in the Crimes for which they suffer.

AND that GOD is pleas'd sometimes justly to punish the whole Society indifferently, for the Sin of the Members, tho

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some may not be as guilty as others, nor perhaps guilty at all of the hainous Sins that hale down G O D's Judgments upon them; but only Lovers of the Society, and induced thereby to overlook the Sin, is a Matter notorious in Common Experience, and needs not be prov'd. Thus, the Company and Friends of *Corah*, and all that had a Dependence upon him, were with him swallowed up alive, tho' we don't read of their being Partakers with him in the particular Sin, *Numb. 17.* that Incensed G O D to vindicate his Honour by so remarkable a Vengeance. And how often the *Israelites* were Sufferers for their bare Familiarity with the Heathen, will be very notorious upon a diligent Enquiry into their History, recorded in the Bible. Even the good King *Jehosaphat* suffer'd *1 Kings 22.* for his Friendship with wicked *Ahab*, and *32.* scarce escaped with his Life. And it is no ways to be wonder'd at, when G O D is pleas'd to give such a strict and full Charge *Pr. 4. 14,* against such Familiarity, that he should punish *15.* such as heed not his Prohibition, but twist themselves notwithstanding; into such an Acquaintance and Intimacy. Moreover,

4. I N Cases of Difficulty, Wicked Companions use to give very hurtful and ruinous Advice. The Matter here speaks for itself, they can advise to nothing but what their own wicked Hearts approve; they must

must therefore advise to carry on Designs that are no ways justifiable, or else notoriously evil: And the Methods they advise to, must be as destructive as the Design is wicked: Misery and Calamity being in the just Providence of G O D, a constant Attendant and Consequence of Sin. And sure it needs not be prov'd, that the Proud will by his Advice bloat and swell the Mind of his Companion; the Malicious sharpen and set a keen Edge on his Temper; the Drunkard, and Glutton, and Lustful, persuade him to the Gratification of his raging Appetites, &c.

Ezek. 18.
30.

B U T 'tis in Cases of Difficulty that their Advice is especially ruinous. If the Man be at any Time affronted or injured by others, how frequently do they advise to the most desperate Revenge? If in the Way of his Business, he be entangled and perplexed to what fatal Hazards do they, by their Advice, expose him? And how many Thousands have ruin'd themselves by hearkning at such Seasons, to evil Counsellors? But however, the best Advice they ordinarily give, is to divert from the displeasing Meditation, and give themselves up to a Course of Jollity, that may stupify the Mind, and render it quite insensible of the Burthen that presses upon it.

A N D they hurry them on to this Course of Life, with more than common Vehemency, if their Consciences begin to awake

and to upbraid with Sin; if a Beam of Divine Light raises a Conviction in their Minds, *Pr. I. 10,* and brings them to any serious Thoughtfulness about the Matters of GOD, their Souls, *11, 12, 13* and a coming Eternity. Here they labour hard to perswade them off from the uneasy Thought, to slight and disregard the troublesome Impressions, to choak them up and overwhelm them by a Torrent of lewd Mirth, by a grosser Life of Debauchery than they had led before; How intent are they upon securing them for themselves? How impatient of their growing Melancholy religious Fools? And how many Devilish Arts do they use to take away wholly, all Sense and Feeling of Conscience, that it may never more grow uneasy? They may be in no Danger of losing their Companion, or of having any uneasy Thoughts awakened in their own Minds, by his Convictions and Disquiet. How do they use after this Manner to bespeak him? Puh! 'Tis a Madness to be thus uneasy about Religious Trifles, the Dotage of melancholy Men, who dream of a Life beyond this, which none of them ever saw. Who would bereave himself of the Comforts of Time, and lead a Pensive and dejected Life, because of the unprov'd Dreams of some fanciful Fools, who would fetter up the World by unnecessary Restraints, and turn it into an universal Hermitage. No, no; let us enjoy our selves, whilst Time lasts, and

and take no Thought for hereafter ; but banish all such uneasy Thoughts from our Breasts, as would stab our present Pleasures or confine our Delights within any Bounds choak up Conscience, and drown its Cries and if it will still be troublesome, use Violence with it, and tell it that it shall be still that we will not hearken to such a dotting Tormentor, but will drive on Time as merrily as we can, in Wordly Pursuits, and think of another World, (if it must be thought upon at all) when there's no more Felicity to be had in this. But never let the Thought of distant Invisibilities, an unseen God and Hell, or the Upbraidings of Conscience within, restrain us from those Worldly Objects, that offer to our Eyes and Appetites so many Charms and Allurements. After this Manner do they make their Address to the grieved Soul ; thus do they give the Advice for the Removal of his Troubles. Oh mad and ruinous Advice ! As mischiefous and Fatal, as if they directed a Sword to the Breast of a distracted Companion, and bid him thrust Home to his Heart, and thro' it with his own Hands, signifying him (to heighten his Fury and encourage him to make a certain Dispatch) that they themselves would bear him Company, and open their own Hearts, provided he would destroy himself in like Manner.

5. And Lastly. WHEN the Companion is in greatest Distress, and most needs their Assistance, they generally desert him, and have neither Power nor Inclination to afford him any. Thus, if by following their Advice, or Example, the poor Wretch brings Ruin on himself, becomes a Prey to Justice, the sinful Companions shift for themselves, and desert him: He must no longer expect Relief, or Help from them. If by their Society he hath been induc'd to melt away a good Estate, and reduce himself to Beggary, he is kick'd out of their Company, and left to starve for his wicked Folly: He is no longer fit to Club with them, but shames and reproaches his Associates, and therefore must withdraw. If by sharpening Gamesters he has been chous'd out of his Money, and strip'd the very Skin, he meets with no Pity from them; but the despicable Wretch must shift for himself; he may die with Cold and Hunger if he will, they'll not relieve him. If in their Company he out-spends his Estate, contracts Debt, and for Default of Payment be imprisoned in a Prison, and there be at the Point of starving for Want of Necessaries, no Pity to them an Ancient Companion stirs in their breasts; or however, they'll not abate a white of their own Expences for his Release or Support. How many Instances of this

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Nature,

Nature, may our own Observation upon an easy Review furnish us with?

B U T (which is the most pityable Case of all) if the Man be troubled about his Everlasting Interest, and they cannot perswade him to wear off the Terror; if **G O D's** Arrows stick fast in him, and Mirth and Jollity will not relieve him, then they fly his Society, as most frightful, leave him to his Inward Tortures; and as they cannot administer to his Ease, so they dare not afford him their Company. If by a Debauch he be cast into a Feavour, or lingring Consumption, and begins upon the Brink of Eternity to rub up his Eyes, look backward on his past Actions, look forward to the Everlasting World whether he is going, and then in these concluding Moments, desires their Company, that they would now either bring a Charm to ease the Inward Gnawings of his Conscience, or else seriously hearken whilst as a dying Man, he shews them the Folly of their Course of Life, exclaims against the Madness of his own, or solemnly warns them to a quick Repentance. There is none that have the Courage to come nigh him, they shun him as they would do Death and the Grave. He is in their Account, the most Ghastly Spectacle they can look upon.

A N D how many, Sirs, do you meet with who in this forlorn Condition reproach 'em
 selves

elves with their desperate Folly, their Companions with their Unkindness, upbraid and stab themselves with painful and cutting Reflections, and accuse them? How do they thus bemoan themselves? Oh! that I should hearken to the sinful Motions of my own corrupt Heart! To their Fatal Advices, and suffer my Company to put off the Thoughts of G O D, my Soul, and an everlasting Estate till now! Now on the Brink of another World, I see my Folly, but despair of a Cure, acknowledge my Madness, my prodigious Madness, but ah! 'tis too late. They have brought me hither to this deplorable, to this despairing, to this raging Condition, and there they leave me; leave me expos'd to the furious Tortures of mine own guilty Conscience, the terrible Wrath of an incensed G O D, and the killing Prospect of Eternal Misery just before me, and now they are gone! They could hurry me on to that Sin which hath brought me to this dismal State, but now can say nothing to relieve or ease me, and shun my Sight as intollerable. My Groans they can't hear, my Pains they can't ease, my Terrors they can't remove, nor save me from the Grave, from the Justice of G O D, from the Misery of Hell. And is this the Issue of my Delights! This the Fatal Upshot and Conclusion of our Friendship! Am I thus forgotten! Am I thus abhorr'd! Oh Melancholy Folly! Oh!

Melancholy Folly! Oh Madness beyond Expression or Thought! What have I done? Where am I? In a Wilderness solitary and distress'd, and not a Friend comes near me! Oh that I had dwelt more with GOD and Good Men! They would not have abandoned me thus in a Time of Extremity. I should now have them standing round me with refreshing Cordials. Oh that I had fled such very Ruinous Society, that I had rather pass'd away my Life in some forlorn Corner, in some uninhabited Desert among Lions and Tygers! But ah! I complain in vain, I must, (I see) I must away from all my mad Companions and Delights, make my Appearance at the Bar of GOD, there to be condemn'd, and then thrust from thence into Hell, to languish for ever in Chains of Darkness, among that madder and Eternally raging Society that inhabit there.

WE have dispatch'd the Three former Heads of our Discourse, and proceed to the Last, to make Improvement, or

IV. APPLICATION. Is Wicked Company thus Infective and ruinous? Hence we may

I. GIVE some Account of the prodigious Wickedness that abounds in the World. Whence it has spread it self so wide, and is grown to such a Measure of Insolence, so
that

that we may almost apply to the present Inhabitants, the Description G O D gives us of the Old World, which in dreadful Justice he swept away by the Waters of a Flood.

That all Flesh had corrupted their Way, and the whole Earth was filled with Violence. i. e. Gen. 6. 11, 12, 13.

The most daring and presumptuous Sins. It may be fairly accounted far from the Doctrine we have already laid down; for the Principles of Aversion from God, and Rebellion and Enmity against him, which are born with Man's Nature, in this state of Apostacy, incline him to all Evil. He hath a natural Instinct that invites him to Society. His Love to Sin, and Propensions to Society (operating in Conjunction) do evidently render him fond of evil Company; this suits him best, and most corresponds with his depraved Faculties and Appetites: And sure 'tis obvious, that a Society thus pleasing, pleasing from his natural Inclinations to Society; more pleasing from his potent Aversions to that which is good, and as powerful Tendencies to that which is evil, will do very much to heighten this sinful Temper of his, to stimulate and push him forward to the more eager Commission of Sin, and to embolden and harden him therein.

I T is evident, that the Society that most pleases, will have most Influence upon the Man, and according to the Measure of his Delight in them, will their Degree of Influ-

ence be: And as every Opportunity he enjoys their Company will the more endear them to him, so every Season of sinful Pleasure will the more enrage and confirm his Inward Distempers; as the rubbing of the *Itch* spreads it farther, or as the adding Fuel to the Flames, causes them to burn out with the greater Vehemence and Rage. And 'tis as evident, that Example will give a strange Boldness in the most Hazardous Attempts. A Man who by himself would be withheld from Sin by the Commanding Restraints of Conscience, or the Dread of Divine Vengeance, will in Company forget both one and the other, and venture, without any Remorse or Reluctance, on what, whilst alone, he had no Courage to commit. Emulation of others stirs on to the same daring Undertakings with them. Mutual Affection persuades on to an Equality of Guilt, tho' at the Hazard of Equal Vengeance and Misery, to avoid being charg'd by a Beloved Associate with Want of Affection, because of an Unwillingness to run the same Risque with him, and defy the same Dangers.

THIS being then (as we have made evident) the natural Tendency and Effect of evil Company; and Man being a Creature very fond of Society in the best State of his Nature; of evil Society in the present depraved State thereof; it is, no Wonder that Wick-
edness,

edness, vast and Inolent Wickedness should overspread the Earth, as it now doth.

THE Infection is already communicated to all; Society tends to spread it farther, the Mischeif is capable of prodigious Increase: It is no Wonder it should be so General, no Wonder it should be so monstrous. Moreover we may infer

2. THE Madness and Misery of the greatest Part of the World. Their Madness in being fond of such ruinous and destructive Society, their Misery in living under the Influences thereof. Is it easily credible, that Men who have the Use of their Reason, and see so many frightful Wrecks before their Eyes, so many Ghastly Ruins made in Families and Estates, so much Infamy, Contempt and Shame, so much Poverty and Misery brought on particular Persons, should yet (by I know not what secret Spells) be bewitch'd with the same Society that hath produc'd these very formidable Effects; and love it with that Fondness as if they courted Ruin, and were pleas'd with the Thoughts of being undone?

INDEED another World lyes out of Sight, and Men can very easily shift the Thoughts of that, who will hearken to the Suggestions of their corrupt Hearts. But one would think Ruins in their outward Estate of so easy Observation, and so com-

mon Event, should make deeper Impression upon them, and bring 'em to a more serious Thoughtfulness. And in Reality, they are never the less mad, for venturing on Ruin in another Life; (tho' it be out of Sight, and they have not any Occular Demonstration of the Certainty and Greatness of the Ruin as they have in the other Cases) because tho' they see it not, yet they have as much Evidence for the Truth thereof, as puts the Matter out of all rational Doubt as much as could fairly be desired, as could well be given, GOD having pawn'd his own Veracity and Faithfulness for the Certainty thereof.

ALAS! What a strange Blindness is that of the depraved Mind of Man? What a Numness hath seiz'd his Faculties, that he should no more freely, no more seriously think on the Matters that do most highly concern him? But by an Instinct as blind as what moves the Brutes, should adjourn himself to that Society that most suits with Corrupt Nature, without looking to the mischievous and deadly Consequences of such an Association. Methinks we may even transfer hither that Expression of the

2 Pet. 2. 12. *Apostle Peter, They are as natural Brute Beasts made to be taken and destroyed.* Or that Pa-

Jude 10. *parallel one of Jude, What they know naturally in those Things they corrupt themselves. i. e. They act by the blind Impulses of a Sensual*

and

and Brutish Nature, with as much Inconsideration as the very Beasts. and by following Tendencies of theirs, do grossly pollute and degrade themselves. And is not this Madness? Is it not worse than Madness? Oh! How mad then is the greatest Part of Mankind? It is a Numberless Majority that mix themselves with such Society: Indeed they are very few who have escap'd the Contagion, and that not without the Intervention of the Mighty Power of Divine Grace, that has snatch'd them as Brands out of the Burning, and sav'd them from the common Mischief and Ruin.

AND is not the World as miserable, as it is mad and foolish, when the greatest Part of Mankind by far, have such a Fondness for the ruinous Society of the Wicked? Indeed the whole World seems to the enlightened *Christian*, a Great *Bedlam*, or Hospital, where the greatest Part by far, are either distracted or maim'd, or else with the utmost Impatience and Eagerness, courting the Loss of their Sense and Limbs. And Wicked Society, like some hideous Rock, on which Thousands have been dash'd in Pieces, and Bodies and Goods swim round on the Surface of the Waters; and yet, (Oh! fatal Madnels!) others without any Horror at the very frightful Spectacle, will thrust forward on the same Mischief, tho' they go down quick to the bottom, and leave floating above,
the

the same Ruins with others who have gone before them. The greatest Part of Mankind will keep to the Company which is so dangerous; and that when the Danger is obvious, and the Ruins of others appear, wherever they look around them. Nay, if they had but the Liberty and Freedom of Thought, becoming Men, would perceive that the encroaching Mischief had already seiz'd on themselves, and is every Day advancing forward their utter Ruin; if not in the present Life, yet in a Future, where the Ruin will be as sure and inconceivably more terrible, tho' it be out of Sight. and tho' they do what they can to put off the Thoughts of it.

A L A S! Can there be a more affecting Prospect, than to see an Herd of Men destitute of their Senses, and led on by I know not what potent Charms of Society, leaping headlong from a Precipice, dashing to Pieces in the Descent, and scattering the Ruins of their Bodies, their Blood, and Brains, and Bones on the Rocks in the Way, and on the Ground below? Yet, 'tis a Thousand fold more frightful Prospect we have before us, to see the Generality of Mankind following each other to Misery and Ruin upon Earth, and to the incomparably more Ghastly Misery of a Future Hell; hurry'd on by the mighty Impulse of perswasive Lust, the Inborn Corruption

ption of a depraved Nature, the Charms
 of a mad Society, to Poverty and Shame,
 and Disgrace, and Misery, on Earth; and
 to the flaming Horrors of utter Darkneſs.
 Oh miſerable State! Nothing can be con-
 ceiv'd more frightful, but the Accompliſh-
 ment of that Ruin, to which they are mak-
 ing very haſty Approaches. Let me graft
 on the foregoing a

3. HOW much Reaſon have all, (eſpe-
 cially Youth) to be cautious of ſuch Society?
 The Danger is great and common, and 'tis
 eaſy to ſee that Youth is eſpecially expoſ'd;
 becauſe whiſt their Blood runs warmly
 thro' their Veins, and the Motions of the
 carnal Appetite are ſtrong and lively,
 they the are more eaſily won by the Tempta-
 tion, grow fond of the Society, their evil
 habits are the moſt eaſily confirm'd and im-
 prov'd; ſo that the Poſſeſſion of their Hearts
 once gotten is a laſting one, and they are
 very hardly recovered when once they are
 embarked in the ruinous Society. And
 how frequently in all Experience, are
 Youth entangled and undone by ſuch Com-
 pany and that with Diſpatch? Not only with
 reſpect to the preſent Life, but what is
 much more fatal and deplorable, loſt for
 eternity: Firſt give their Appetites the
 full Rein, and encourage them by the Ex-
 ample of their Companions in the higheſt
 Extra-

Extravagancies, check or bribe their Consciences, and at length having fear'd them bid Defiance to all Principles of Religion, Honour, or Honesty, and live in open Contempt of the Laws of GOD, and an avowed Disbelief of the Truths of his Revelation.

SOLOMON (it is very likely) from this Perswasion, addressees many of the first Chapter of his Book of *Proverbs* to his Son, and in one of them gives a very remarkable Instance of the Prevalency of evil Society with Youth. *I beheld among the simple ones, I discern'd among the Youth, a young Man void of Understanding, that was easily seduc'd by the enticing Words of an Harlot.* And what the melancholy Consequences of his Seduction were, the Series of the Chapter discovers.

HOWEVER, Youth are not the only Persons endangered: There is Society in the World to suit every Age and Stage of Life, with succesful Temptations, and others proceed to the fore-mentioned Measure of Blindness, Profaness, and Malignity, by quite different Steps.

BUT if this be the Melancholy State of the Case; is it not most evident, that all Persons have the Highest Reason in the World, to be cautious in the Choice of their Society? That they may not through evil Influence, be hurry'd away into the worst and most provoking Sins: Nay,

they avoid openly lewd and profane Company, yet if they mingle with such as are vain and foolish, and have no Savour of Religion, their Converse is like to breed in Unconcern about the Things of GOD, if it doth not produce a Contempt of him, and whatever is Sacred. And really, when we carry about with us corrupt Natures, that are so easily tickled and entic'd to that which is sinful, we have all need to use the utmost Caution in this Case; especially, when an innate Inclination to Society helps forward the powerful Tendency of Lust, makes the Danger therefore the greater, and the Success of the Temptation more easy and sure.

4 THEN those deserve Reproof, that make too bold with evil Company. Under which I comprehend such who may be civiliz'd, but have no powerful Savour of Religion, nor by their Converse discover any serious Regard to the great Matters of GOD, their Souls and Eternity. And alas! Who is there that more or less, is not liable to this Reproof?

1. EVEN those who are born again by the Power of Grace, and have a prevailing Abhorrence of that which is flatly evil, a prevailing Flatness towards that which is not truly Good; are yet too bold
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in exposing themselves in Society, too hardly in venturing into, too frequent, and too free, and pleas'd with the Company of Evil Doers: For, alas! they have the Remnants of Corruption in them, tho' they are freed from the Reign thereof; and the Lustings of corrupt Nature are too much humour'd and fed by them. And it is (alas!) a Matter obvious in common Experience, that in Compliance with their Company, they too frequently close their Mouths in GOD's Cause, lend a patient Ear to the Froth and Folly, if not to the downright Sin and Wickedness of their Companions, and involve themselves thereby in their Guilt, thro' just Participation.

NOR do they keep that Guard over themselves as they ought to do, but often hearken to their own corrupt Inclinations, or the Insinuations of others, to their own Prejudice, Disquiet and Mischief, to the raising a Clamor within, by alaruming Conscience; or what is much worse, to the making a Stand in the Christian Life, by laying it asleep:

AND alas! the Worldy Affairs which must be manag'd and carry'd on in such Society, frequently prove much to their Hurt, and they excuse themselves in their sinful Compliances, and unjustifiable Pleas'dness with the Society, by a Pretence of necessary Business, let down their Watch, and

are then easily taken and overcome. Whereas they should never indeed mingle with such Society, but with an heedful Observation of, and Restraint laid upon themselves. And as *Solomon* advises in another Case, for the due Regulation and Confinement of an Appetite, whetted by the Presence of suitable Objects, to keep a Knife at the Throats, so should they by a sense of their Danger, on all such Occasions, quicken their Attention and Vigilancy. But *Pro. 23. 2.*

2. THOSE are much more to be reprov'd, who without any Care or Caution, venture upon any Society. That lend a patient Ear to all Temptations of this Nature, without any serious Thought, or careful Distinction; that without any Respect to the Danger or Fear of it, will hearken to every insinuating Argument that is us'd to invite them into any Company; and so fearlessly and inconsiderately expose themselves to the Danger and Mischief (which we have shewn you) is to be expected from evil Company. He being easily ensnar'd by them, and held fast, and ruin'd, who without Distinction, or serious Thought, will thus expose himself. And doth he not deserve a very severe Rebuke, that will affect this Manner venture on his own Destruction, and to gratify unaccountable Humour, mingle with a Society of Mad-men, grow

grow raving as well as they, by being us'd to their Converse, and at last perish infallibly with them? Certainly, that Man who will thus offer himself to inevitable Ruin, deserves the most serious Reproof, if he ben't deaf to all Advice, and grown too dangerously stupid to receive any Benefit from it. But

3. **A R E** they most of all to be reprov'd, who are not only easily seduc'd into wicked Company, but court it, and make it their Business to inveagle and seduce others: That are only gratified whilst they are making themselves vile among such Companions; and entring unwary and unsettled poor Sinners, whom they can Influence, in the same Devilish Society: That compass Sea and Land to make Profelytes, for the Devil, and train them up in all the wicked Arts and Practices themselves use, to Sear Conscience, and work their Minds into the most desperate Contempt of **G O D**: the most inveterate Hatred of any Thing that bears his Image. That are continually looking out for such (especially among the Youth) that they can most easily make a Prey of, and when they have once entred them into the Club, do their utmost to wear off all sober Impressions, and transform them into as very Beasts and Devils as themselves; who can laugh at the Terror

of Divine Justice, brave Hell and Damnation; in a Word are grown, Heroes in Lust, and (as long as Opportunities and Temptations, and the Noises and Clamours of sensual Mirth and Jollity will buoy up their Spirits, and keep off all dreadful Apprehensions of another Nature,) will shew themselves more desperately Couragious than the Devils, by disbeleiving and turning into Ridicule, that Wrath of GOD, and Misery of the Damn'd, which the Devils believe and feel, and at which they *Jam. 2. 19* tremble: That can't be content to go to Hell by themselves, but do their utmost to destroy others with them; tho' at the same Time, they heat the Furnace of Divine Wrath the more glowing Hot for themselves, and aggravate their own Misery and Damnation: Who use their main Endeavours to poison all the Society with whom they converse, wth their own mischievous Principles, to communicate to them the same Measure of Insolence in Sin and Contempt of GOD, which is grown natural to themselves, to perswade them to cast off GOD, Heaven or Hell, and pass away Life in one continued Rant of the grossest Debauchery and Lewdness, and enjoy themselves up in such a Course of life, by a raging Infidelity.

SURELY, if the Society of such Persons by the very natural Influence of it be

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ruinous

ruinous, (I mean) when they do not use themselves with Vigor and Industry to propagate the mad Temper; themselves must be doubly ruin'd, who use their utmost Art and Industry to infect and sensualize others to make them vile, and lewd, and devilish.

Pr. 15. 12. *Am. 5. 10* **INDEED** these Men scorn our Admonitions and Rebukes, they laugh at the first, and rage at the last. But if they'll be mad, we must not forbear to shew them their Folly and Danger: And let them laugh and rage on, 'tis but a very little While, before they'll as much ubraid themselves with their Folly and Madnes; as ten Thousand-fold more than we can do. 'Tis but a short Season, before they'll rage with much greater Vehemency against themselves, than they can now rage against us, if not in this Life, yet certainly with Repentance, in another; when the inward Torments of their own Minds will fretting them for ever, and they in Anguish and Horror will gnash their Teeth and tear themselves to Pieces with their own Hands, for their desperate Contempt of the serious Advice, for their malignant and devilish Rage at the kind Rebukes such as would have shewn them their Folly, persuaded them off from the ruining Design, and to a fitter and useful Employment of their Faculties,

ers, and Industry. I shall close up the Discourse with an

5. EXHORTATION to two or three Sorts of Persons.

1. **TO** such as have already been engaged by wicked Men, and are their Companions. My main Advicie is immediately to desert their Company; For **GOD's** Sake, Sirs, stand still a little, and debate the Case with your selves. We have not given a full Account of the Matter we have been treating of; but may we not call in you as Evidences that we have given a fair State of Things? As Evidences of the Contagion of wicked Company? Ask your selves (if you have so much Consideration left,) what Progresses you have made in Vice, since you have been thus mischievously yoked. Are you not grown more bold, and impudent in a Course of Sin, as well as more raging and furious? Are you not every day more averse to serious Consideration, to any Retirement from the World, for serious Debate with your selves; more fond of the fatal Converse, more charm'd therewith, more stimulated and encourag'd thereby in a Course of Sinning: Don't you find that you now have an high Contempt of **GOD**, and this growing apace not only to blasphemous Talk, and the

highest Degrees of Lewdness, in Despight
of the Restraints of his Law, and the ter-
rible Threatnings by which it is enforc'd,
but) to a bold Infidelity, an utter Disbe-
lief of, and Disregard to the common Prin-
ciples of natural Religion, and those Per-
suasions of Mankind about the Honesty and
Decency of their Actions, that have been
entertain'd among Heathens, and do serve
to support the Awfulness of Vertue, to up-
hold Societies, and to maintain Peace and
Order in any tollerable Measure in the
World. And Sirs, can you feel the dan-
gerous Poyson creeping on to the Vitals
(for if once you lose a Sense of these com-
mon Principles, all Feeling of Conscience
is lost, and your selves are lost also, with-
out a Miracle,) and yet not be startled at
the amazing Folly? What, are you hur-
ried away by an impetuous Stream? And
do you slide smoothly on to a dangerous
Precipice, from whence, you'll be inevita-
bly plung'd into utter Ruin, and have you
lost your Senses! Are you depriv'd of the
Understanding of Men! Do not you see whe-
ther you are going? Or doth the Din-
der of Pleasure, and the potent Fascination of such
a mad Society, hurry all Composure
of your Thoughts, blind your Eyes? And
will you drive on without looking before
you, or ever expostulating with your-
selves, till the Flames of Hell shall awake

you, till you perish with the ruinous Society on which you dote? Methinks, (if GOD hath not given you up to a reprobate Mind,) it should not be impossible in such a plain Case to rescue you, to prevail upon you to break off from the destructive Converse, and quit the Society. And suppose you are yet Men who have Reason that you can exercise, that you have Thought and Consideration, tho' alas I perceive you do little use it, and are sinfully disinclin'd to such an Exercise. But for GOD's Sake Sirs, in a Matter of such importance, resolve for once, to hear the voice of Conscience, and a little use your sober Thoughts whilst we propose to you a few serious Questions. And Conscience charge thee, do thine Office.

1. DID your Consciences never rebuke you in secret, for your free Converse with the Wicked, for your rash and familiar Use of their Society? Had you never any Inward horrors at their Course of Life? Can you ever remember any particular Seasons or intervals, wherein you had at least a Thought and Suspicion that still you did amiss in such Converse? A Suspicion that still grew more uneasy, the more you attended thereto, and against which you had no other Way to defend your selves, but by turning it out of your Thoughts, and a

resolv'd non-Attention to the unpleasant Suggestion? You may now, perhaps, have overgrown this Uneasiness, and have no such Pangs; but let me ask you whether you have acted like Men, in thus stifling your own Convictions, in this resolved Deafness to the uneasy Clamours of Conscience? Whether you have done according to the Perswasions of Reason, in flying these Inward Motions, and using the utmost Artifice, and sometimes Violence, to free your selves from the troublesome Thought? Or is it justifiable in your own sober Sense, (if you have any remaining,) to rush thus upon a beloved Society, in spite of your own reluctant Thoughts, before you had debated the Matter thoroughly, and examined whether you did well or ill, in such a free Conversation with the Wicked?

2. DO you in your Consciences believe that you are now answering the great End for which you were made? Do you think you were made for no other Ends than to grow sensual, brutish, and prophane, lewd, and Atheistical, by the charming Endearment of a mad Society? Can you in your Consciences believe the great GOD gave you Powers, and Thought, and Time, and outward Enjoyment, to be thus us'd and exercised, and spent? What, in idle, impertinent

ment, scurrilous, lewd, blasphemous, and Atheistical Discourses and Behaviour, in vain Mirth and Prodigality, in wastful Expences, and a dozy Idleness? To live like Brutes, and by the powerful Impulses of a sensual Nature, to Herd together for these most unmanly Purposes, without any Fore-Thought or Consideration. Oh Fatal Thoughtfulness? Is this a Life becoming a rational Creature? Suiting the Ends of its Being, or any Ways approvable to its own sober Thoughts? Is this Converse truly Manly, this Society truly preferable? Can you in your own Consciences deem it such? You are then past the Reach and Relief of all Argment, are transform'd into very Brutes and Monsters; but are really so far from answering the End for which you were made, that you are doing what you can to contradict and oppose it. But however, we'll suppose you given up by GOD to make such a false Estimate of Things, and will proceed farther with you on such a Supposition. Let me ask you then farther.

3. D O you really believe that these Perswasions of yours, this Relish of the Society will continue for ever? That you shall always have the same Delight in the Converse of these wicked Fools? Do you think that you shall never be con-

vinc'd that your present Notions are mistaken ones? That you shall never have any uneasy, reproachful Self-Reflections on the Folly and Madness of your Converse? What, are you safe then from the Dangers and Ruins that are usually the Consequents of such Society? Are you sure you shall never hereafter pinch for your present Pleasure, or pine for your present Excesses? Or if not thus secure; are you safe from the Torments of your own Mind, when your Calamities shall awaken it? What, is it stupified then in your own Apprehensions, beyond all Recovery? Will it never again be quickned to any Sense and Feeling? Or do you think you shall charm the Tormentor, by a Reflection on your past Delights, or have any other Considerations to Antidote against Inward Terrors and Torments? If you have such a Thought let me enquire farther.

4. DID you never hear of a poor Wretch, that after he had been undone (as to Worldly Enjoyments) by such Society, groan'd out the bitterest Complaints against his lamentable Folly, raging at his Companions, and tormenting himself. One who having brought Shame, and Disgrace, and Poverty, and Ruin on himself thro' their Example, thro' these pleasing Enticements, thro' their Advice and Instigations,

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first languish'd a while, and then sunk under the Inward Tortures of a grieved Mind, grew melancholy, or raging ; and at length to get rid of his Internal Vexations, laid violent Hands upon himself, and by Sword, or Pistol, or Rope, or Poyson, hurry'd himself from a miserable Life, into a more miserable Hell. I say, did you never hear of such a Person? Will none of the Ages past, nor our very degenerate one furnish any such Examples? Yes Sirs, they are too common as well as deplorable. And have you any Security, that the great G O D will not in Justice, leave you to languish under such Inward Or Torments, and at length execute Justice or upon you by your own Hands? Or can De- you believe that you are Proof against ons all such Terrors and Vexations? What and have you to secure you against G O D's Ven- let geance, or to stupify your Souls more than others, that you should have any such Con- science? But to proceed.

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(as 5. DID you never stand by the Bed
ety, of a dying Companion. One who (per-
instaps) thro' his Life was as fond of wick-
om-d Company as you are; but when he
One me to die, had a piercing Conviction
ace, of the Madness of his past Life and Con-
thro' rse, and in dreadful Agonies of Soul breath-
ice- out the most doleful Farewell to his for-
ons, er Mirth and ruinous Conversation? Did
first you

you never hear the despairing Groans that such utter, their terrifying Shrieks and Outcries, and the mournful Lamentations they make over their mischievous Folly? Do you never observe how their Countenances and Carriage discover the painful Rackings, Struggles, and Terrors of their diseased Minds?

I know indeed, its usual for you in this Calamity, to shift an Attendance on the dearest Associate. But sure your Love must have for once overpois'd your Dread of such a Sight, and carried you away to the Death-Bed of such a Companion: And can you ever forget, how he vex'd at, and upbraided himself, how he accus'd, condemn'd and curs'd with despairing Vehemency and Rage, his Wicked Companions? With how much solemn Terror he warn'd Survivors to take heed to themselves, and avoid the dangerous Rocks on which he had been wreckt; especially to leave that wicked Company, and Course of Living, that stain'd so hideously in his Face, and tormented him in so Ghastly a Manner, in the last languishing Period of his Life? And finally In what Horrors and Anguish he groan'd out his last Breath, and left the World. And do you think these Terrors could be avoided? The Mind diverted from any melancholy Thought, or eas'd under any Weight. Would they thus languish and pine? Would

they thus rage at, and tear themselves, if they could procure any Ease or Relief?

BUT if you decline a Visit to them when thus distress'd, what Reason can you render for it? Indeed I acknowledge it is no pleasing Spectacle to see a Dear Intimate thus stretch'd on the Rack, and in the highest Agonies of Soul declaring his Uneasiness in Life, and Abhorrence of Death. But let your Consciences deal fairly with you. Is not this the immediate real Reason of your Absence, that you fear his dying Groans should awaken your Consciences, and spoil your sinful Pleasures, lest you should grow melancholy and raging as well as he, and have thereby a Period put at once to all your valued Enjoyments? And do you really shrink from him in this Calamity for this Reason? Oh mad Behaviour! What, do you know that you have Consciences within that don't approve what you are doing? Consciences which such a Sight and Observation will violently rouse? And are you not wretchedly cheated by the Devil then, since if you have such a Conscience, you have no Security against its Torments? The great GOD may in Justice awaken it at his Pleasure, and take a Thousand Advantages against you, to terrify you with this Inward Tormentor. So that in Reality, you are not like to escape this Misery by avoiding their Sight,
but

but only provoke GOD the more, and the more expose your selves to his Wrath thereby. Again

6. DO you ever expect to die your selves? And do you think, that in View of another World, into which you are just launching forward, that you shall make any pleasing Reflections on your Life and Company? Others who have gone before you, (tho' they could never be convinc'd before) have then acknowledged their Madnes and rag'd at it. What should secure you against the same Convictions and Tortures? Do you think (that when you are just hovering over an everlasting World, and look in to it, when in View of the dreadful Tribunal of GOD, and just ready to appear thereat,) it will no Way contribute to your Terror and Disturbance, to bethink your selves, how madly you have spent your Time, and in what mad Society and Mirth you have drown'd all serious, practical, and sound Thoughts of GOD, your Souls, and another World? Or shall you then have any Relish of that Society, in which you have so foolishly thrown away your Time to GOD's great Dishonour, your own greatest Prejudice? Will their Mirth and Jollity, their loud Laughter, or impertinent Prating or Disputes, make then any Mischief in your Ears? Will you then prefer

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choose such Converse? Will not the most grave and serious Society, who can talk to you warmly, feelingly, and with Savour of the Things of GOD, who can pray with you, and for you, who can give you good Advice, and instruct you how to make your Peace with GOD, and to escape the Miseries before you, be then more esteem'd? And are you not worse than mad, to choose such for your Companions whilst alive, which (if you die in your Senses, and are not given up by GOD to a reprobate Mind,) you'll hate above all others when you come to die, and scarce endure to see them; or if you do see them, it must be with Horror, at their, and your own desperate Folly; to your own Inward Grief and Reproach; to their Terror and Torment? Again

7. HOW do you think such Company will please, when you make your Appearance in the Judgment, and shall have your Lives enquir'd into, at that dreadful Bar of GOD? They did by their Advices, Example and Encouragements, help to buoy up your Spirits whilst alive: Do you think they'll afford you any such Relief against the Menaces of an angry Judge, and the Terrors of your Condemnation on such a Day? When all your Deeds of Darkness shall be expos'd to Light, all your shameful Practices shall

shall be publish'd to the World, not with Mirth, and Raillery, and Pleasure, as your selves have done heretofore, but with dreadful Vengeance: Not to make Sport for you, but to fill you with Shame, and blushing Indignation. And do you think it will be any Ways pleasing, to have it declar'd to the whole World, that in such wicked Company, and Practices, you spent your precious Time, to GOD's Dishonour, and your own Ruin? Will you have Courage to own and defend your Companions in the Presence of your Judge, the Holy Angels, and Glorified Saints, some of which (perhaps) caution'd you against the perilous Association? Sure, if you have the common Sense and Feeling of Men, you must tremble at the Thoughts of a Convention before that Judge, on such a Season, in the Presence of so many Glorious Spectators, with so dishonourable, base, and wicked a Company: You can never think it will be any Relief to you then, to have your Associates around you, to have them present there, tho' you can now make a Shift thro' their Presence, Example and Encouragement, to free your selves from your Inward Torments, by a stupid non-Attention to the Suggestions of your own Minds? But

8. And I shall say no more. Do you think such Society as this will be pleasing

to you, when you shall be chain'd up in utter Darkneſs, with them, among Devils and damned Spirits? Do you think their Shrieks and Out-cries and despairing Lamentations, will tend to the Quiet of your enraged Conſciences, or the ſtifling your Groans? Do you think they'll be then able or willing to adminiſter any of their Ancient Cordials for your Relief? No, let me tell you, all ſinful pleaſing Objects will be then remov'd far away from your Sight and Reach: You'll have nothing to gratify Appetites and Paſſions, nothing to divert from the uneaſy Reproaches of your own Thoughts, nothing to ſtop out the Noiſe and frightful Din of their Groans, and raging Out-cries: Nay, throughout Eternity, will you rave at them, and they with the moſt venomous Spite return your Reproaches upon you, ſo that you'll be for ever curſing and tearing each other, with the higheſt Malignity of enraged Spirits.

O H Sirs, you can't conceive how the very Sight of each other then will terrify, how much you wou'd then ſhun each others Sight if you could; and when you cannot, how much 'twill whet your raging Paſſions, and provoke you to wreck on each other the moſt devilish Spite. Every Reflection upon a Season of Pleaſure you enjoy'd together, in the former Courſe of
your

Luke 16.
27, 28.

your Life, will sharpen your Rage against each other; the dearer you were to each other in Life, the more pleas'd with each others Company, the more hateful will you be then, the more dreaded and abhorr'd. Alas! Can you think that (when GOD's Wrath shall be there pour'd forth upon you to the uttermost, and you shall feel the flaming Ruins brought upon you, by a Course of Sin) you will be able to avoid these mutual Upbraidings, and Vexations? No, certainly when you consider how much your mutual Converse contributed to that your Misery, and hasten'd you away the more pleasantly, and certainly thither, 'twill be impossible to escape each others Reproaches and Injuries, each others venomous Lashes and Tortures. You'll then faint, and die, at each others Sight, as you now languish for it, as much shun as you court the Company: But you would never willingly whilst alive, and you shall then be confin'd to them, and for ever be tormented, exasperated, and stung with their raging Reproaches, Mischiefs and Tortures.

AND can you yet have Courage to continue the Associates of wicked Fools? Can you be content, for the Enjoyment of their Company, to run all these Hazards, and thus expose your selves? Expose your selves to the uneasy Checks and Reproaches of your Consciences

sciences, whilst you live, awakened by the Calamities and raging Deaths of your Companions! Expose your selves to the Wrath of GOD when you die, and to that Shame and Confusion of Face which will seize you in the General Judgment before the whole World, for your Choice of such Society! And finally expose you to the everlasting Malice and Rage of your now dearest Associates (and that grown most venomous and deadly) in a future Hell! Then you are worse than mad, and past the Reach of all Argument. But I hope GOD will by these Considerations, awaken some, and bring them to a serious Enquiry, what must be done for their Escape from the Contagion, and the Danger: And for such I subjoin the following Directions.

Dir. 1. GO away, and humbly confess unto GOD, deplore before him, and earnestly beg Pardon from him, for the Sin you have been guilty of, in choosing and delighting in the Company of wicked Fools. I don't mean barely that you should go into the Presence of GOD, and tell him that you have thus sinfully play'd the Fool; But endeavour first of all, by a serious and thoughtful Consideration of the Madness and Sinfulness of your past Course, to get a Feeling thereof, that so you may esteem your selves exceeding vile, your

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Life and Conversation exceeding sinful, and may thereupon go to **G O D**, and with deep Compunction and Grief of Heart, with the lowest Humility and debasing Sense of your Selves, with the most hateful and angry Conceptions of your Sin, confess it to him, deplore and lament before him your Folly, Madness, and Transgression, that you should in such a Manner dishonour him, waste your precious Time, to the great Hurt of your own Souls, to the Damage, Hardning, nay (perhaps) the eternal Ruin of some of your Companions, whom **G O D** may have hurried away in his just Wrath, since you have had an Intimacy with the Society.

AND oh! earnestly pray to **G O D**, that for Christ's sake, he would pardon these heinous and vile Offences of yours. Beg that he would blot out your very foul Transgressions, that he would not charge them on you, to your utter Ruin, as you have deserv'd, but that according to the Multitudes of his tender Mercies in Christ, he would receive you, and welcome you, poor returning Prodigals, willing now to leave the Society, and to give your selves up to him thro' Christ, to be justify'd by his Blood and Righteousness, and sav'd from deserv'd Wrath. And when you have this done, it is fit I should advise you,

Dir.

Dir. 2. IMMEDIATELY without any more Delay, utterly to break off from the Society, to renounce them for ever, and resolve that you'll never more use their Familiar Conversation. On all Occasions (unless where real Necessity obliges) shun them, fly from them. You would thus abandon the dearest Intimate, when sick of the Plague; and flee for your own Safety. Do so here also. Desert this ruinous Society at once, and for ever. If you meddle with them again, you expose your selves to the same, perhaps greater Danger: You'll quickly be won by their plausible Pretences and Insinuations, quickly forget all the Terrors you have felt, all your Grievs and Lamentations, if you come within their Reach, till you are quite out of Danger. Keep them then at the farthest possible Distance: Allow them not your Ear, nor any free and pleasing Conversation with you; as much as you can, avoid all Conversation with them. To a Mind truly sensible of the Evil, and Danger of evil Company, this Advice will seem so reasonable, that every Exception against it will at the first View, look too frivolous to deserve an Answer: However, that we may fully clear our Way, we'll pause a little to answer One or Two.

YOU'LL say, perhaps, it is hard to break off in so abrupt a Manner from Company, we shall be charg'd with Incivility, and Want of good Breeding. Gradually we will withdraw from the Society, but all at once we cannot do it. Let me tell you, if you yield thus far, we have gain'd nothing upon you; the treacherous Evil will again get an easy and a quiet Possession of you, you'll very quickly be knit as fast to the Society as ever. And your Recovery afterward will be much more difficult than now, if ever GOD should again give you a Sense of your Danger, and don't immediately upon your Return to the Company, give you up for desperate. And let me ask you, would you reckon it uncivil, should you make an hasty Escape from a mad Companion, that with a drawn Sword attempted your Life? Or would you in meer good Nature, expose your self in his Company, and hazard your own Murther? And if you would not thus in Civility venture your Life, will you yet venture your Soul, and Eternal Misery. Be perswaded to take Solomon's Advice; *Enter not into the Path of the Wicked, go not into the Way of evil Doers, avoid it, Pass not by it, turn from it and pass away.*

Pro. 4. 13,
14.

AGAIN you'll say, but alas we shall be laught at, and scorn'd by our Companions, they'll droll upon us, and make us the

the Matter of their sportive Mirth. But is this indeed an Evil to be dreaded? Who would not despise the Laughter of a Fool or mad-Man? And why is it these Men laugh? But because they are blinded by the Devil, and see not their Danger: And is the Scoffing Mirth of such miserable mad-Men to be regarded? But besides, it is really little better than Madness to make this Objection; for which is most formidable, the Mirth of wicked Fools, or the Vengeance of the great GOD? Which is the easier Calamity, to be laugh't at by them, or to be damn'd for ever? To be their Sport for a little while on Earth, or in their Company to ridicule what is most Sacred, and then go with them to Hell, and in the Bitterest Anguish of Soul, howl there for ever. But

3. GO to the Depth of the Distemper, be sensible of your cursed natural Depravation, and be restless in your selves 'till you have obtain'd of GOD, sanctify'd Hearts. Do not reckon the Cure is effected by your deserting the Society, unless the Contagion you have suck'd in by their Converse is purg'd out by the Grace of *Ep. 2. 22,* GOD, and your Souls are new born *23, 24.* thro' his mighty Power, after his Image: *Col. 3. 10.* Unless you are indue'd from on High, with a Disposedness, and a prevailing Relish *Col. 3. 1, 2.*

Rom. 8. 4, of Spiritual Objects, Exercises and Pleasures: Until you have an Inward Habitual Loathing of every Thing which is really evil; and therefore especially of that Society which will humour, and gratify, and instigate, and confirm evil Principles, and Instigations: Until you have a prevailing Love to GOD, and Christ, and Holiness, and the Heavenly Felicity, and do (in Comparison of these) reckon the Business of the World meer Dreams and Shadows, and every Thing that is displeasing to GOD and Christ, and opposite to the Life of Faith here, and the Heavenly Life above, vile and abominable; you are not got out of the Reach of Infection by evil Company, nor then neither indeed, without serious Caution and Watchfulness. Let it then be your chief Business to get Holy, Spiritual, Heavenly Hearts. Pray earnestly to GOD thro' Christ for this.

Eph. 6. 18.

And oh, don't give over praying, 'till you find such Sprirituality and Heavenliness is become the reigning Temper of your Minds; 'till (from a prevailing Relish of much better Things) you do as much abhor such sinful Society, as ever heretofore you valued and lov'd, and made Choice of it; 'till you can converse with GOD in Solitude, with his Saints, about the great Things of his Kingdom, with much greater Pleasure and Freedom than ever you us'd their

their Company. In one Word, be at no Rest in your Selves, give GOD no Rest, but even weary him with your Prayers, 'till your Soul is pleasedly devoted to GOD through Christ, and doth Heattily abhor every Thing that is displeasing to him. And then thro' his Grace with the Exercise of a due Vigilancy, you are likely to escape the perilous Snares of evil Company. And when the Matter is brought to this prosperous Issue, it is fit to advise you,

4. TO labour with true Christian Pity and Earnestness to fetch off, as many as you can influence, from the contagious and ruinous Society. Labour hard with GOD in your Prayers for them, and remember, that if GOD by his Grace, hath sav'd you from the Misery and Ruin which your Company with them threatned, that it is a Piece of Justice you owe them, to do somewhat for their Conversion, whom by your Presence and Example, you have perhaps brought over, and fasten'd to the Society, or encourag'd to continue among them, and sin with them. Do what you can then, to warn them of their Danger, to convince them of the real Difference in Point of Safety, Honour, Advantage, and Pleasure, between the Brutish, Carnal, Wordly, Careless Life they do yet lead, and you once liv'd with them, and that

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Holy,

Holy, Humble, Self-denying, Spiritual, Heavenly Life, which through the mighty Power of Divine Grace, you have been perswaded and enabled to live. Use your utmost Art and Perswasion to draw them from the Society of evil Doers, and prevail upon them to tast and see how good GOD is, and how much more Manly, Pleasing, Glorious, his Service is, than the base Servitude of Lust, and the Devil's Drudgery: How much more Noble, Entertaining Converse 'tis to talk of the great Matters of the Christian Life, the great and good Things the Christian hopes for, than of the grosser Pleasures of Sense, the empty, trifling, unconcerning Prattle, in which unsanctified and wicked Companions spend their Time. And pray earnestly that GOD would give a Blessing to your Endeavours for the Recovery of your Companions. My

2 *Exhort.* Is to such as have yet escaped wicked Company. I mean such as is grossly and scandalously such. Oh Sirs, be perswaded to avoid such ruinous Society as this; keep out of Reach, and as much as you can, shun all Converse with such; and never be with them but in Cases of Necessity. Especially let me advise the **YOUTH** to shun such Contagious and ruinous Converse. I can't think you are wil-

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ling at once to be ruin'd as to both Worlds,
 nor can any with their Eyes open, leap
 into everlasting Misery. No, the Devil
 knows this, and as much as he can hides
 the Danger: He hath an Art to blind Mens
 Eyes, and charm them into a non-Attendance
 to the Misery before them, and so destroys
 thoughtless and unwary Souls. He doth
 not open to their View the Flames of Hell,
 that would scare them from swallowing his
 Baites, and hearken to his ruinous Perswa-
 sions: But he strews the Way thither with
 Flowers, instigates by proper Baits and
 Objects, their Carnal Minds, perswades them
 to follow the Impulse of depraved Appe-
 tites and Passions, and to use those Methods
 that will gratify and enrage these Appetites;
 and so leads them forward blindly to ever-
 lasting Ruin. But Sirs, let me perswade
 you to be-think your selves, whether we
 have not fairly represented the dangerous
 Tendency of evil Company. And can
 you dare to choose and prefer it, when
 the Danger is so certain and unavoida-
 ble! Let me ask you if you felt a Natural
 instinct, urging you over a Precipice, eve-
 ry Time you came near one, or perswading
 you to plunge into the Water and drown
 your selves, ever Time you stood on the
 shore, would you not check the dangerous
 instinct, and avoid carefully all such Rocks
 and Shores, would you not pray earnestly
 to

to GOD for Deliverance from the destructive Impulse? And will ye not do the same in the present Case, where Native Corruption advises you to plunge forward into endless Flames, and pushes you into the Society that will help forward your everlasting Ruin? Will you not check this powerful Propension of corrupt Nature, avoid the Society and seek to GOD for a Cure for a Deliverance from the Danger of such innate Perswasion? Yes Sirs, be perswaded to labour hard, 'till you feel your Souls sanctified and renewed by Grace, have given up your selves to GOD thro' Christ, and are become in a prevailing Manner, suited to the Divine Life and Converse. This will poise you, and keep you steady against all the Power of wicked Perswasion, nothing else will: 'Tis Grace alone that will establish the Heart. And by all Means keep out of the Influence of such wicked Fools. Adjoyn your selves to the Company of such as have a Savour of real Religion, and discover it in their Conversation, prize Acquaintance with them, delight in them, and rather choose Retirement and Solitude, than the hurtful Conversation of the wicked. And tho' this may seem a hard Injunction to such as are young, and feel very powerful Propensions to Societie, yet I suppose I need not ask them whether they are willing to be damned.

or Company. Nor when I have propos'd that Question, need I say any more to evince the Reason and Seasonableness of this Advice.

IN a Word, be perswaded to labour for the Cure of natural Corruption, for a Reconciliation to G O D thro' Christ, or Sanctified, Holy, Heavenly Hearts and Prayers. Keep out of the dangerous Society of the Wicked, 'till you have obtain'd this at the Hands of GOD, and then I'll trust you for your future Converse: Inclination, and a cautious Concern for your selves, will then operate together with the Grace of God, to prevent your Infection. And let the certain Truth of what we have set before you, be us'd by you, as a constant Motive to enforce this Advice. Once more

3. *Exhor.* TO true Believers. Such as are in a prevailing Degree sanctified. As much as you can, avoid Familiarity with the Wicked, Indeed as far as Justifiable Worldly Business, as far as true Human Friendship with Safety to themselves, and a Salve to the Honour of GOD) will plead for such Converse, I have nothing to object against it. But few upon Enquiry will find these are the only Motives to their Converse. Few but will upon a due Examination, be found guilty of a freer Conversation,

versation, and greater Compliance, than can be honestly accounted for, on the Principles.

Y O U who are guilty then, be persuaded to humble your selves before **G O D** that you have been too ready to go into the Company, before Reason advis'd them to, too free in the Company after once you were enter'd. And oh! be more cautious and wary for the future. Keep a stricter Watch, that you may not venture into the Society, but for justifiable Ends; that when you are with them, you may comply no farther than is allowable by the strict Rules of your Profession. I only urge this Advice with a few Motives and conclude.

Mot. 1. **THE Honour of G O D** requires your great Care in this Case. It is next to impossible to be in some Company, and not be Witnesses to their hind Provocations and Affronts of the Great Majesty of Heaven and Earth: And every Christian with a due Regard to **G O D**'s Honour, mingle with such Society, and have a free Converse with them any farther than there is flat Necessity for. But however the Christian's Profession obliges him to have such a Regard to his own Conversation, and walk so carefully as to manifest in his whole Behaviour,

great Reverence of GOD, Zeal for his glory, and Concern to please him, which can never testify by a familiar Converse with the Wicked. He dishonours GOD when by too free a Conversation with them, and a too great Readiness to joyn their company, or continue therein, when upon justifiable Occasions he is with them; and much more by shewing any Pleasedness with their Converse and Behaviour, and therefore should avoid it.

2. YOUR own Souls chief Interest requires also your Care in this Respect. You carry corrupt Natures about with you, that are in Danger of Infection from evil Company. You will easily take a Carnal Tincture from Carnal Society, grow light and vain if you accompany with such, and you may easily perceive what a Disrelish of serious and sacred Things is left upon your Mind, after such Converse, and how much 'tis therefore your Concern to shun the Society, if you would preserve a serious Frame of Spirit. And tho' this Influence should not prevail to your Seduction into a Course of Sin, (the Principle of Grace within forbidding that,) yet it may retard your Progress towards Glory, and slacken your Pace, lessen your Taste of Spiritual Things, make you more listless and indifferent than you should be, (than otherwise you would be,)

to

to the Things of GOD; and so prove a great Hindrance, and in GOD's just Judgment, a great Disquiet to you in your Journey. So that you evidently hurt your selves by such a Converse.

3. You'll prejudice those also with whom you converse. They'll encourage themselves in their wicked Course, when they have you for their free Associates. Nor can you imagine how much 'twill help forward the vicious Inclination in them, to have the Conivance of any that are truly Godly and much more to have them for the Abettors: Nay, but the Company of one who makes a stricter Profession than themselves, tho' they are really as great Enemies to the Inward Life and Power of Religion, will very much encourage them to grow more Bold and Licentious. The fancy such a Person's Presence will either sanctify the greatest Villanies, or at least excuse them. And is it not then the Concern of every truly Godly Person, to avoid the Society, out of Pity and Charity to these Self-Destroyers, when they'll make such an ill Use of his being there? On more, and I have done.

4. It would be proper for the Christian sometimes to think seriously with himself what if GOD should come, and call

(III)

ch Society as this, to Judgment ! What I should be immediately arrested whilst I am there, and carry'd away to the Bar of my Lord ! How could I answer for my associating with them ? What Account should I give for my Coming into the Company, or my Behaviour there ? Will the Motives and Principles that brought me thither, and kept me there, endure to be scan'd by him ? Did we live more in View of this Tribunal, we should be more careful and exact in ordering our Conversation ; shou'd more adjust our Thoughts and Actions to the Prescriptions of God's Holy Word, and avoid thereby a great many Errors and Mistakes in our Conduct, escape a great many Mischiefs and Dangers to which we otherwise expose both our selves and others.

Many more Motives might be us'd to press this Advice : but I shall conclude all with the Words of the Apostle Paul, *Be 2 Cor. 6. not unequally yoked together with Unbelievers ; 14, 15, 16. For what Communion hath Righteousness with 17. Unrighteousness, or Light with Darknes ? Or what Concord hath Christ with Belial ? And what Agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols ? Wherefore come out from among them, saith the Lord ; and be ye seperate, and touch not the unclean Thing.*

F I N I S.

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